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THE CORRESPONDENCE

OF

HORACE WALPOLE,

EARL OF ORFORD,

AND THE

REV. WILLIAM MASON.

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED FROM THE ORIGINAL MSS.

EDITED, WITH NOTES,

BY THE REV. J. MITFORD.

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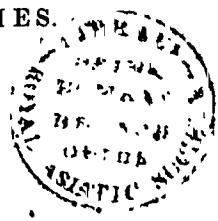
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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CORRESPONDENCE

OF

THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE

AND

THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, July 24, 1778.

Yours of the 19th I did not receive till yesterday. I do not write again so soon to answer it, but on a subject very foreign to all my last, and which I will tell you presently, when I have replied to a few of your articles.

I did not discover, and certainly did not suspect, a bacchanalian disposition in a certain person, for we dined together but once. We think alike on that subject, I assure you, but I will reserve it for our meeting.

Madame du Deffand said nothing on the strawberries and cream, nor if I asked her would she probably remember to answer. She never interested herself about Rousseau, nor admired him. Her understanding is too just not to be disgusted with his paradoxes and affectations, and his eloquence could not captivate her, for she hates eloquence. She liked no style but Vol-

taire's, and has an aversion to all modern philosophers. She has scarce mentioned Rousseau, living or dead; and D'Alembert was egregiously mistaken in thinking she wrote my letter to him; Rousseau would have been still more offended had he known how very little she ever thought on him. She was born and had lived in the age of true taste, and allowed nobody but Voltaire to belong to it. She holds that all the rest have corrupted their taste and language. La Fontaine is her Idol; that is, simplicity is.

But I shall not forget to answer you on the article of strawberries and cream. How very kind to caution me against them; and how kindly I take it! In truth I am very temperate now on that head, as well as on all others. I eat very little cream, remembering that my stomach is not so young as it was; but for wine, I am persuaded fruit never hurts me, unless wine is poured on it. Yet the other day I did drink two glasses. The excessive heat of the nights had exhausted me so much, that I had recourse to that cordial, and it quite restored me; it would not unless a novelty. I beg your pardon for talking on myself, but gratitude opened my heart. I feel your goodness with great satisfaction, for it could please me in no form more than yours; and I wished to prove to you that one you regard, is not childish.

I doubt much whether I can get you a print of the Duchess of Devonshire: certainly not before winter, for Lady Di is at Brighthelmstone; but I will try then; she had not many proofs for herself, and I know had

not one left. Everybody, from taste or fashion, tore them away. The duke, her brother, paid for the plate, and would suffer I think,—but two hundred impressions to be taken. I promised the Duke of Gloucester to beg one for him, which perhaps will not be refused. If I can obtain two, the second is yours. I have set my own in a frame I trust you will like, as it harmonizes with it amazingly, though rich.

I have been two days in town. What I could collect was, that the Congress will not deign to send any answer to the Commissioners; that Lord Howe refused to act as one of them, and that the bear and the monkey have quarrelled. That the Americans have sent an expedition to Florida, and that Washington's army is reduced to seven thousand and is very sickly, one should think the two last circumstances were invented to balance the others, but surely our ministers ought at last to exaggerate on the other side, that things may seem to turn out better than was expected rather than worse, as hitherto they have contrived to make them appear.

France has *not* declared war; and if the Brest fleet did sail it was not a stone's throw. I imagine they wait for news of D'Estains, before they take the last step, or they will draw Keppel aside, and then set forth an embarkation. I sometimes hope peace is not impossible. It cannot be half so bad as a new war in our present situation. It would at least give us time to prepare for war. We are come to the necessity of fortifying the island, or it may be lost in a single battle.

When we have no longer the superiority at sea, it would be madness — it would — it is madness to have no resource, no spot where to make a stand — but what signify my politics? who will listen to them?

It is not unlucky that I have got something to divert my mind: for I can think on other subjects when I have them, I am at last forced to enter into the history of the supposed Rowley's poems. I must write on it, nay, what is more, print, not directly, controversially, but in my own defence. Some Jackanapes at Bristol, I don't know who, has published Chatterton's works; and I suppose to provoke me to tell the story, accuses me of treating that marvellous creature with contempt; which having supposed, contrary to truth, he invites his readers to feel indignation at me. It has more than once before been insinuated that his disappointment from me contributed to his horrid fate. You know how gently I treated him. He was a consummate villain, and had gone enormous lengths before he destroyed himself. It would be cruel indeed if one was to be deemed the assassin of every rogue that miscarries in attempting to cheat one; in short the attack is now too direct not to be repelled. Two months ago I did draw up an account of my share in that affair. That narrative and an answer to this insult which I wrote last night I will publish, signed with my name, but not advertized by it. It will reach all those that take part in the controversy, and I do not desire it should go farther. These things I will have transcribed, and ask

your leave to send you before they go to the press. I am in no hurry to publish, nor is the moment a decent one, yet I embrace it, as I shall be the less talked over. I hate controversy, yet to be silent now, would be interpreted guilt; and it is impossible to be more innocent than I was in that affair. Being innocent, I take care not to be angry. Mr. Tyrwhitt, one of the enthusiasts to Rowley, has recanted and published against the authenticity of the poems. The new publisher of Chatterton's undisputed works, seems to question the rest too, so his attack on me must be mere impertinent curiosity; one satisfaction will arise from all this: the almost incredible genius of Chatterton will be ascertained. He had generally genuine powers of poetry; often wit, and sometimes natural humour. I have seen reams of his writing, beside what is printed. He had a strong vein of satire too, and very irascible resentment; yet the poor soul perished before he was nineteen! He had read, and written, as if he was four-score, yet it cannot be discovered when or where. He had no more principles than if he had been one of all our late administrations. He was an instance that a compleat genius and a compleat rogue can be formed before a man is of age. The world has generally the honour of their education, but it is not necessary; you see by Chatterton, that an individual could be as perfect as a senate! Adieu!

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 10, 1778.

I did not write to you on our naval skirmish, because I had nothing to add to what you saw in the papers. It is evident the French had orders to risk nothing, and accordingly they got out of the scrape as fast as they could, yet they pretend that our fleet retired first. If it had, we should have taken as much pains to charge Mr. Keppel as they could. The consequences are and probably will be good. Their flight will not encourage them, and it has saved our East India fleet, which is all come in. I have heard enough to make me change my mind about Spain, who I believe will join in the *mêlée*, unless we are awed into peace, which I cannot but suppose is the meaning of the war going on in this equivocal shape. I expect to hear some *beau matin* that every thing is compromised. There are reasons both good and bad why it ought not to surprise one.

I have lengthened my Chattertonian pamphlet, and now think shall not publish it. It will clear me whenever it does appear, and I have rather more respect for posterity than for the present generations, who have evidently lost all ideas of right and wrong; but I will say no more on two topics of so little worth as the present age and myself.

In lieu of every thing else, I here send you an original indeed,— the preface to Rousseau's Memoires,

which is got out, though the work itself is I believe not yet published. The style, the singularity, the intolerable vanity, speak it genuine,— nay, so does the laboured eloquence, which would be sublime if it were not affected phrenzy, and worse. I wish you not to give copies, because, should it be discovered, I should be said to have spread it to his prejudice; yet I have none, nor am angry with him by the common rule, because I offended him. So far from it, I have always allowed his masterly genius, and was only angry with him for his own sake, that he who was born to be superior in common sense should have stooped to build his fame on paradox, and seemed to choose rather to be talked of for the singularity of his writings, than for their excellence; but this preface goes farther, much farther.— He aims at being the capital figure at the last day. I send it to you, shocking as it is: *la voici.* —

Je forme une entreprise qui n'eût jamais d'examples, et dont l'execution n'aura point d'imitateurs. Je vais montrer à mes semblables un homme dans toute la verité de la nature, et cet homme c'est moi.

Moi seul je sens mon cœur et connois les hommes; je ne suis fait comme aucun de ceux que j'ai vus; j'ose croire n'être fait comme aucun de ceux qui existent; je ne vaux pas mieux ou moins, je suis autre; si la nature a bien ou mal fait de briser le moule dans lequel elle m'a jetté, c'est ce dont on ne peut juger qu'après m'avoir lû. Que la trompette du jugement dernier sonne quand elle voudra je viendrai, ce livre à

la main, me presenter devant le souverain juge. Je dirai hautement, voilà ce que j'ai fait, ce que j'ai pensé, ce que je suis ; j'ai dit le bien et le mal avec la même franchise ; je n'ai rien tû, rien déguisé, rien pallié ; je me suis montré coupable et vil quand je l'ai été ; j'ai montré mon intérieur comme tu l'as vû toi-même, être éternel ; rassemble autour de moi l'innombrable foule de mes semblables ; qu'ils écoutent mes confessions, qu'ils rougissent de mes indignités, qu'ils gémissent de mes misères ; que chacun devoilé à son tour son cœur aux pieds de ton trône, et qu'un seul te dise ensuite, je suis meilleur que cet homme là.

What can one see in this rhapsody of insufferable pride but a studied delirium, an arrogant humiliation, a confession turned into a bravado,— and for what theatre! and before whom! Cartouche might have proposed to talk in such a style at the day of judgment. Think of the audacious insect allotting to himself a mould made on purpose, intending to be the orator of that moment, and demanding to have all mankind judged by comparison with him! To meditate a gasconade for the end of the world!

Suppose, instead of her modest contrite deportment, Mary Magdalen had stalked into the hall of the Pharisee * * * * * *
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* * * I hope a friend of ours will be cured of his enthusiasm to this new Erostratus, who

has burnt the temple of modesty to make himself talked of. Here I finish; it is impossible to add any thing that would be of a piece with this rant.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, August 14, 1778.

I will say nothing about our naval skirmish, nor our land preparations, except that our poor country from being once a well bred gentleman is now turned a downright blackguard. A gentleman when he has received an affront, sends his challenge and then fights his duel. A blackguard in similar circumstances drives his fist directly at the jowl of his adversary and waves the ceremonial of the challenge. I leave you to make the application, only I protest that had Keppel been victorious, I should have hesitated about ringing the three crack'd bells in my country steeple, for I can never think a fair victory can be gained over an enemy before war has been declared. Perhaps I am too punctilious: no matter, we have not been victorious so we wont dispute about it. Your extract from Rousseau is indeed *sui generis* and I thank you a thousand times for it. Poor man, I always pitied him, even when I admired him the most, and I admired him the most in his letter to David Hume, when he was certainly the maddest. As from this foretaste of his memoirs, I conclude they will at least in this equal that letter, I shall read them with avidity whenever they reach my hands,

because they will give me those humane emotions of pity, which many of his other works have given me, and I will never believe with you that his was either studied delirium or affected phrenzy till I am absolutely compelled to it, and this for the sake of that compassionate feeling which his writings do and will excite in me so long as I can believe them written by a madman in good earnest. Prove him a pretender to insanity and the charm vanishes; I shall then regard his eloquence as little as I do Chatterton's poetry. I hope you will think a second time before you resolve not to publish what you have written on this latter subject. I think that to say something about it to the world is a duty you owe to yourself. I shall hope therefore you will bring the MS. with you when we meet next month at Nuneham, and that you will publish it sometime before Christmas. I have an hypothesis of my own concerning those poems which I think I could make out to be at least highly probable: viz. that they were originally all written in modern English and antiquitized after. Had I his modernisms now published, I would take one of them and antiquitize it in two manners, à la Chaucer, and à la Chatterton, and I am persuaded that these two specimens would prove the matter clearer than all the critical arguments that either have or will be produced; and yet I think that T. Warton has done enough in that way to convince even the president of the Antiq. society (if such president were ever capable of conviction) that he was of all forgerers the most palpable; all this however no more

detracts from his poetical abilities than Rousseau's insanity does from his oratorical.

I am waiting here a visit from Giardini, in order to give him all the lights I can for the proper music to Sappho, but whether he will come before or after York races, *i. e.* this next week or the fortnight after, I am yet ignorant; at all adventures I hold myself in readiness to meet you at Nuneham the middle of Sept. if not sooner. Though I have a visit to pay in Shropshire in my way, and mean from thence to come by Birmingham and the Leasowes; all this however shall be lengthened or shortened according to your time of going to Nuneham, where I promise myself the greatest pleasure in meeting you; believe me, dear Sir,

yours very cordially

W. MASON.

Mr. Palgrave is with me and desires his best compliments.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Arlington Street, Aug. 25, 1778.

You have put an end, my dear Sir, to my thoughts of publishing my narrative, for you have said in four lines all that I have been trying to say in thirty pages, so my *native eloquence* which your partiality honours, proves what I have long suspected it was, only easy verbiage. In the early part of my life I wished to have it

known that I was not a fool — doctors differ on the method and on the success: now, when I was grown much more indifferent to fame, you have bestowed on me more than I should ever have presumed to ask. I am now like people that have a ticket to Richmond Park which they lend to others when they can go in without, by being known to be in favour with the proprietor, or like country squires returned for two places, who make their option for the county, and resign their family borough, on which perhaps there is not a tenement left standing; I chuse my niche in your verses; and my namesakes, my uncle, my cousin and his son, shall be welcome to all the memory that shall remain of writings under the appellation of H. W. reserving only what is said of individual me in the life of Gray, whose monument, by the way, I shall visit tomorrow.

I must not say more of your poetry, because it is the only poetry of yours to which I may be partial, but when I have told you how exceedingly I am flattered by being immortalized in it, you may be sure I am content with my patent, I must too say no more because without blending myself with you at least indirectly, I know not how to commend, and I should be the falsest, as well as the vainest of mortals, if I made the smallest comparison between us. I hope you think I know enough of poetry not to confound the genuine heir of the right line with a maker of prose; for Poet, Phœbus knows I am not, and if I do not wave every sort of pretension it is only that you may

not have bestowed an encomium on a subject totally worthless.

I should have replied to your last sooner if I had been sure that you were not set out on your tour. I shall be ready to set out for Nuncham whenever I receive my summons.

It is but this moment that I am come to town, and would fulfil the duty of gratitude, before I inquired about the new engagement in America. For the gazette account, I do not understand it, which is being a good subject, for like other such relations, it is only meant to confound. All I do know is that on Sunday night the undisciplined courtiers spoke of it in most dismal terms. If I guess right Washington was ill served, and thence, and by the violent heats, could not effect all his purpose; but an army on a march through a hostile country, that is twice beaten back, which is owned, whose men drop down with heat, have no hospitals, and were hurrying to a place of security; must have lost more than 380 men. In fact they were hurrying whence they could not stay into the last trap. They will be starved into surrender or desperation at New York; and D'Estain is blocking up our port and fleet, and a swinging lie will the gazette have to tell, if both army and fleet are taken.

The papers say that Keppel and Palisser have fought a duel, I do not know how truly. The reason given in the papers is *not* the true if another that has been whispered is; namely that Palisser did not obey Keppel's signal, though the former at first behaved bravely;

and is not suspected of want of spirit, but of Mindenian finesse, and that by secret order of the Trident-bearer. Keppel was much insulted at Plymouth, by the sane direction as supposed; and that provocation may have brought out what was at first suppressed. However I affirm nothing of all this, though I have heard enough by different channels to incline me to believe there is an appearance of foundation in the ground work; though it is impossible to conceive that revenge could have blinded an old politician, so far as to have made him lose all sight of the advantage that would have accrued even to himself from a victory.

In short disgraces and misfortunes thicken so fast, that I believe there will be no time to unravel half, while there is an opportunity, supposing there were one. History will be forced to poke and patch out scraps, and when the whole is a heap of ruins, some David Hume will be to compose a system of wise and virtuous motives, which always tend to produce folly and crimes, and then the induction will be, that nobody thould be wise and virtuous. Adieu! Adieu!

P. S. You may imagine I am impatient for the sequel.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Aug. 2, 1778.

I have seen Gray's monument. The absolutely necessary position is very disadvantageous to it, and

prevents any grace in the outline; his nose is a little too aquiline, but both his head and the Muse's are well executed, her body is a little flat, and her legs, from the same want of place, too small and crouded; your Epitaph and Friendship are the most shining ingredients.

When I mention your friendship for him, I recollect that I was too much intoxicated in my last with your partiality to me. I mean that I did not receive it with humility enough; but in the satisfaction of being recorded by you forgot how little I deserve it. As there has been so much of blameable in my life, I am conscious that I ought to desire to be spoken of by my enemies, and not by my friends, that the truth may be told, not palliated. To ask that, would be an artful way of avoiding it. I have been told that what I begged you to say of my being the first to blame in my differences with Gray, persuaded some that the reverse was true. I am sure *that* was not my intention; and I would say it still more strongly, if it would not look affected. I have a horror for any praise that one does not deserve; humility is next to vain glory, if it is put on, and has no merit but in avoiding impudence. Simplicity is the medium to be sought, and silence about one's self the surest way of being simple. A corner in your writings which you have allotted to me, I am not lowly enough to wave: but I have regard enough for you to desire that you should never say any thing of me that you may be ashamed of; remember, your writings will be standards, and remember too that Pope's blindness to Bolinbroke took off the edge of

half his satires, I shall not suffer you to hurt your own fame in compliment to me, early and late have I despised Cicero's *orna me*. Has one better claim to praise one has not earned, than to money one has stolen? and to beg one's friend to lie for one! no, my dear Sir, there are a few honest good men that deserve such verses as yours,— I should think I robbed them, while they want your praise.

I had written thus far, when I received your second part by Mr. Alderson; you desire me not to write, but to bring you my answer, and odd as the request is, I shall obey it for two reasons; the first is, that the impression of your seal is so sharp, that I am convinced all or most of those you send by the post have been opened. The second is that your modesty would not permit me to tell you to your face how much I am charmed with your poetry. You have an original talent for this style, that without resembling either, is much more like Horace's than Pope's was; and instead of piddling with petty dunces, you gibbet greater dunces and much greater rogues. Nay you do, what history cannot, for you record their villanies, and if history's majestic gravity could contrive to register them, yet nobody would read what ought to be enrolled only by the ordinary of Newgate, but when you make your readers laugh at our state culprits they will remember them.

There are two odd rencontres in your second part that I must mention, you have introduced the Duke of Richmond, who is one of the virtuous few that is wor-

thy of such a pen as yours, and was in' my eye in the foregoing page, and you have brought in Pope, and Lord Mansfield, which I have done too in my narrative, as you will see though for a different quotation, but in short, you have made my narrative useless; you have anticipated it by inspiration, and Apollo has made you prophet as well as a poet. I that knew all the circumstances have told tediously what you, by magic I think, have set in a ten times clearer light and compendiously. And as I owed to you and Gray the confirmation of my doubts at first, you have told all that is necessary of my story for me and made it entertaining. Remember this is not to flatter you and draw more panegyric from you; you have justified me in as innocent a transaction as any of my life, and I am more than satisfied, and the best way of thanking you is to be jealous of your honour and to turn it on more meritorious objects. I do not deserve praise; to justify the innocent is worthy of you,—if I was not irreproachable on the article of Chatterton I assure you I would tell you so, for instead of being pleased with your defence, it would aggravate my contrition, and, therefore, I beg you will never put me to shame. My parts are moderate and I trouble my head little about them; but I would give a pound of them if I have so much, for an ounce more of virtues. The crisis of this country will soon put all men to the test; brand the guilty and reward the good; and since the fountain of honour is now the channel of corruption, wrench the chalice from

his hand and dispense the waters to the deserving. The moment is coming I think when the constitution may be restored though not the empire. If they who call themselves patriots, flinch from their duty, they will deserve your lash, still more than the present crew. I have no great hopes, though the moment is so propitious (as it is a repetition of precedent lessons) for showing that the folly of tyranny leads directly to the destruction of darling prerogative. I have sometimes thought, so servile has been the copy, that Lord Mansfield has drawn out the steps of James II, and recommended them one by one, in order to ruin the house of Hanover by the same manœuvres that paved their way to the crown. Or he was a woeful, or a most presumptuous politician, to flatter himself he could succeed where Jefferies and Jesuits failed. In short, he and the Scotch have no way of redeeming the credit of their understandings, but by avowing that they have been consummate villains. *Stavano bene; per star meglio, stanno qui.*

Aug. 28, 1778.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 17, 1778.

I should not for one moment have delayed thanking your lordship for the honour of your very kind invitation if I had not been absent, and did not receive it till last night when I returned from Park Place after the

post was gone. I had gone thither to keep Mr. Conway and Lady Ailesbury company on the death of Lord William Campbell, and was frightened home by an attack of the gout in my knee, which prevents me, my dear lord, from daring to name a day for having the great pleasure of waiting on your Lordship and Lady Harcourt. I do hope to execute my wish on Monday next, for the motion of the chaise has removed the pain into my foot, and when it flutters about I have seldom found it to end in a fit; yet vexatious as it would be to lose my visit to Nuneham, it would mortify me still more to trouble your Lordship with my decrepitude, and therefore be assured I will not venture if I am not quite well, and as *Herculean* as ever. My best friends shall not be troubled with my moans, nor my enemies neither, though the last sooner; and yet I abhor Lady Mary Wortley, who said, "People wish their enemies dead — but I do not; I say give them the gout, give them the stone!" indeed I would not give them a bodily pang — a little twitch in their minds, that would make them feel for others, would be rather wholesome.

I must not omit my compliments on Colonel Harcourt's marriage, and yet it is not with perfect cordiality. It is not thence I wish for a Lord Nuneham. Pray forgive me; in friendship I am a Tory, and love the right line, though I desire the house of Harcourt may reach to the end of the world, as it has reached from the beginning.

I beg your Lordship's prayers for those that are to travel by land or water, or rather that they may travel,

and pray do it as sincerely and fervently as he does for whom your prayers are desired.

Your Lodrship's
most faithful and obedient
humble servant
HOR. WALPOLE.

P. S. Your Lordship authorizes me and therefore I presume to add the following words to an Israelite indeed.

To Mr. Mason.

Vide in my writing box a long letter that will clear me from your accusation; and the reasons why I chuse to bring it myself, moreover I have waited time out of mind for Mr. Alderson. I pressed him to come and see my house and flattered myself that would be a temptation but he is a Priest,

And Strawberry must yield to Sion Hill.

As to wanting the conclusion, I do ardently, especially if it is ad infinitum; do you think I can have enough of you, of you *issime*? do you imagine I have no self love? am I so accustomed to flattery as to be surfeited with it? am I to be praised in every magazine like Garrick and Dr. Johnson; and if not satiated with panegyrics, do I write them on myself, like the former? do I not know that a line of yours will preserve me like a fly in amber? what do you think is come to me? in short in self-defence I must tell you why I did not send away my letter. I have done such justice on myself in it, on

your account, that my modesty would not hold out; and though I shall be rigorously just enough to trust you with my confession, I could not bring myself to stand in a sheet before the clerks of the Post Office, and I am too idle to write a letter over again — so much for that.

I sit feeling and handling and probing myself from hand to foot and putting myself to pain, in trying if the gout is gone. I am just like Harlequin, when he was tickling himself to death. If it does not come before Monday, I shall think myself safe. I was rejoiced to be got home; but when I came up into the blue room, and found Lord Harcourt's letter, I was out of my wits; yet I do not despair, as the journey has shifted the seat of the pain, which I always reckon a good symptom. I have begged the prayers of Lord Harcourt and his congregation, but I will have none of yours: they are not worth a straw. Should we be in such a dismal situation, if you could have prayed us out of it? The English clergy have prayed for popery and slavery, and drawn down miseries on us, that will not be suspended for your deprecations, because folly and iniquity are punished by their natural consequences.

My commission to you shall be to lay my homage at Miss Fauquier's feet, which will make it more agreeable. I shall be very happy or very miserable on Monday on all your accounts, as no party could be assembled more to the liking of my heart, but I must not trespass too much in a postscript, for which I again beg Lord Harcourt's pardon. You will oblige me, dear Sir, if you will drop

in conversation that Lady Craven has lately allowed me to print *at my press*, her translation of the Somnambule; and pray observe if no one in the company seems to feel a *soupçon* of remorse. I shall not tell you why, but I have my reasons.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 11, 1778.

A thousand thanks for the trouble you have given yourself, and the information you have sent me; it fully satisfies me, at least till my next visit to Nuneham. I own there is an idea in the play you describe, which had it come into my hand, I should certainly have adopted; — the mother's intention of meeting her own husband and not her son; — however as you have, by a *coup de baguette*, obviated the shocking part, — I trouble myself no farther. I never had any difficulty of adopting your corrections, but because my original view was to paint the height of repentance for real guilt; whereas any palliative admits a degree of weakness in the Countess, and makes her rather superstitious or delicate, than penitent upon reason; but however as I am tired of the subject I will not tire you upon it. If ever the play is acted, it must be with your improvements, which I will print with it. So I will whether it is acted or not: for such marks of your genius should not be lost, though you want not other proofs; and it will please me to have furnished

you with the materials. I grow tired to death of my own things, and hate to talk of them.

Lady Laura, who carries this, will tell you how many accidents prevent my obeying Lord and Lady Harcourt, and accompanying her. I have lost near £700 by a clerk, and I am on Tuesday to sign a family compact with my nephew, by which, sometime or other, I shall get the fortune my father left me, which I never expected, so the balance of events is in my favour, and then the deuce is in it if I am to be pitied.

Lady Laura will describe to you a most brilliant fête that I gave her and her sisters and cousins last Thursday. People may say what they will, but splendid as it was, I am not of opinion that this *festival of nieces* was absolutely the most charming show that ever was seen. I believe the entertainment given by the Queen of the Amazons to the King of Mauritania in the Castle of Ice, and the ball made for the Princess of Persia by the Duke of Sparta in the Saloon of Roses were both of them more delightful, especially as the contrast of the sable Africans with the shining whiteness of the Thracian heroines, and the opposition between the nudity of the Lacedemonian generals and the innumerable folds of linen in the drapery of the Persian ladies, must have been more singular than all the marvels in the Castle of Strawberry last Thursday. To be sure the illumination of the gallery surpassed the palace of the Sun; and when its fretted ceiling, which you know is richer than the roof of paradise, opened for the descent of Mrs. Clive in the full moon,

nothing could be more striking. The circular drawing-room was worthy of the presence of Queen Bess, as many of the old ladies, who remember her, affirmed; and the high altar in the tribune was fitter for a protestant king's hearing mass than the chapel at Lord Petre's. The tapestry bed in the great chamber looked gorgeous (though it had not an escutcheon of pretence like the Duchess of Chandos's while her father and brother are living) and was ready strewed with roses for a hymeneal; but alas! there was the misfortune of the solemnity! Though my nieces looked as well as the Houris, notwithstanding I was disappointed of the house of North to set them off, and though I had sent out one hundred and thirty cards, in this region there are no swains who are under my own almost climacteric. I had three Jews of Abraham's standing, and seven Sarahs who still talk of the second temple. The rest of the company were dowagers and maidens, with silver beards down to their girdles; Henry and Frances, whose doves have long done laying; the curate of the parish; Briscoe, the second-hand silversmith; Mr. Raftor; and Lady Greenwich in a riding-dress, for she came on her own broom. You may perhaps think that some of the company were not quite of dignity adequate to such a high festival, but they were just the persons made the most happy by being invited: and as the haughtiest peers stoop to be civil to shopkeepers before an election, I did not see why I should not do, out of good nature, what the proudest so often do out of interest. I do not mention two

ancient Generals, because they have not been beaten out of America into red ribbands, nor a Judge Persin, who had solicited me to invite his daughters, and brought them on my sending a very civil card, and yet did not so much as write an answer or thank me — but I really believe it was from mere stupidity. If I could grudge your staying at Nuncham, I should regret your not being here in such noble weather. Come however as soon as you can and stay as long.

By the rise of the stocks, and the wonderful hide-and-seek of the fleets I suspect some treaty is brewing; it cannot be so scandalous but it will go down: and therefore it cannot be worse than the Nation deserves. If any thing prevents it, it will be the declaration of the Spanish Embassador, that King Carlos will never acknowledge the Independence of America till King George does, which I suppose the latter will not do, if even the King of Monomatapa or the King of Mechlemberg will encourage him to go on — besides it is a heavenly sight to see soldiers, and not see an enemy! and a more heavenly sight; to see a puppet show, and to lock up one's son, who is of an age to enjoy one! — and yet what command of one's passions to put off a review for a christening! — what pity gazettes-extraordinary were not in fashion, when two shillings were issued out of the Exchequer to Jack of Reading, for getting on the table and making the King sport. This was in the reign of Edward II, and is only recorded in a *computus* still extant. Adieu.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, Aug. 1, 1779.

I received your melancholy (a King's friend would call it a croaking) letter the day after my arrival here after a long journey in which I saw many places and liked a few.

I can tell you nothing, except that I am here a week longer, and then to York, where I hope to keep a regular correspondence with you, if a correspondence will be feasible; till the 8th a letter will find me here, and on the 11th at York.

I am charmed with the notes which will answer my purpose and posterities exactly. I do not think I shall have occasion to add above one or two.

Adieu, my dear Sir, this is merely to tell you where I am and where I am going, indeed I can tell you nothing else, and I fear you must be the chief informer during our next suite of correspondence.

Pray give me joy of the conclusion of my chancery suit, and believe me most

faithfully yours

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 9, 1779.

I know how to wish you joy on the conclusion of

a suit in chancery for I have just carried one there, and may say with truth what never could be applied before to law, *veni, vidi, vici.* My cause was commenced, heard and decided in two months, my palace in Berkeley Square is adjudged to me with costs, and the title bettered by that ordeal, and so I am rejoicing, as the Ministers on the arrival yesterday of the Jamaica fleet, when neither I nor they know whether in two months any property may be worth sixpence. Nobody at your distance can conceive how much is at stake from total and general incapacity. Two dotards are at the head of the only fleet and only army that are to decide our fate; and Lord North with that *bonhommie,* for which a child is whipped when it shouts on setting its own frock on fire, cries, he expects the French every day. I remember a story of General Nieberg, governor of the last emperor, and who lost the first battle against the King of Prussia. He wrote to the Queen of Hungary these words; "*Je suis faché de dire à sa Majesté que son armèe est battue, et tout par la faute de son serviteur Nieberg.*" The Queen who had not contributed, repaired the misfortune.

In one word I assure you I hope, though I do not believe that the invasion will be in Ireland, not England. I wish this because it would be vain to wish that Scotland were south of both. I have no ill will to poor Ireland, but Ucalegon is at least one door farther off than one's own. I saw a letter but two days ago from Dublin which says there is not a shilling to pay the small army there: they are hiding their plate

and flocking to the capital, where there is no army to protect them. London will be in the same case; is to be left to old vain Northumberland and his constables, when the emperor of America takes the field with all his guards. Lord Amherst in the mean time has begun works at Chatham, that cannot be finished in ten years, and then will be commanded by all the hills around: I could tell you forty parallel anecdotes, which if they do not terminate in total destruction, will never be believed, though every step of the last five years have marched towards them. Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, fold their arms and cry, "we have insulted them all so much, that they must sit still till we are humbled." *That will happen,* we shall take a panic at once, and sign any thing; or on the first unexpected and indecisive success flounder on in obstinacy. This reduces one barely to wish for favourable events, with the reversion of chance; for one knows not what to wish coolly. Fortune can scarce dovetail good and bad circumstances so as to repair and strengthen the country and constitution; which if not restored together, the former will at best but languish and never revive, but it is in vain to skim one's thoughts, they boil over, and it is as well to finish now as write on. I will talk as if I did not see further than, I was going to say, most of those who have conducted us to the precipice, but some of them believe me are soundly alarmed. They do see at last that a bribe in hand was not worth two estates in the bush. Well! *parlons comme'si de rien n'etoit.* I was

lately at Beddington and saw there a print I never met with before. It is a mezzotint of a Sir Nicholas Carew, who lived temp. Geo. I, and never did any thing but sit for that print, yet you know how inestimable an unique print — which however is not unique, is to a collector. There are at least five more in the house, and perhaps the plate, or I should not be so audacious as to beg one. In short I should be greatly obliged to Mr. Fountaine if he would give me one. An attorney lives in the mansion, who might be ordered to deliver one to Mr. Thomas Walpole, who lives at Carshalton, not two miles from Beddington. They are all framed and glazed. I do not want their accompanyments nor the print much, if pasted on cloth, though I would deign to accept one so, if no other is to be obtained. Adieu! I have survived many dark moments, and think I do not know by what luck that you and I shall still meet again and pass some agreeable hours. When one reasons, one has few hopes; but a superstitious confidence always carries me to incline to expect that things will end to please me; and as I have found that my star knows much better than I do what is best for me, I commend myself to it, and beg it will mend the scene, as it did after the conquest of New York.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Wednesday night late, August 18, 1779.

All is true that you will see in the papers of the

Marlborough, Isis and Southampton being chased by the French and Spanish fleets of 60 or 63 sail, as the former were going to join Sir Charles Hardy. To day came another express that the united squadron was off Falmouth on Saturday. They are probably come to seek and fight our fleet, which if not joined by those three ships consists of but thirty six,—on whom depends our fate!

I could give you details of unreadiness at home that would shock you, miracles alone can counteract it, and them have we merited. If Hardy does not vanquish to deletion of the enemy, shall we be bettered? if he does, will fool-hardiness be corrected by success? turn whither you will, whence is salvation to come to a nation so besotted? I will give you a sample of what the victors would reserve for those they deem their worst enemies, the friends of their country. The Bishop of Oxford, once a writer in patriot opposition, wrote t'other day to his friend and patron my brother, that Lord Harcourt had invited him to dinner, treated him most benignantly, and not mentioned a word of politics; "surely," added the meek apostle, "if there were a toleration of patriots, Lord Harcourt would be entitled to the benefit of it"—That is St. Dominic would not cut his host's throat, if the holy office ever pardoned, but it does not; and Lord Harcourt must die though he has banquetted a bishop.

It is such wretches and their blundering politics, that in nineteen years have changed a glorious empire into a wide heap of ruins. Amidst these calamities and

public woes, I am trembling for Mr. Conway, who is chained to a rock. I am anxious about the Duke of Richmond, who is exiled to Exeter, and may be exposed to the first descent with a handful of men, but

God and good angels fight on Richmond's side.

His virtues shine the brighter from the cloud of filth that is thrown on them, and a nation cannot be destroyed without its being remembered who would have saved it. History may flatter cotemporaries, but as the dead have no places, no pensions to bestow, truth revives the moment its enemies are in the grave, and then the bones of the *ultimi Anglorum* will be selected and enshrined by poor weeping posterity. You see I am seeking consolation among the reliques of my few friends; cold comfort, a vision of honorary tribute to be paid to the ashes of heroes in a little northern island, that has no pride to live on but the memory of virtuous patriots! Those of happier days will be remembered too! and my father's favourite sentence of *quieta non movere* will appear to have been replete with as much wisdom as Lord Mansfield's schoolboy quotation of the Rubicon being passed. Adieu.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

DEAR SIR, York, August 21, 1779.

I have procured you a Sir Nicholas Carey of the Dean of York, as good an impression I believe as the plate was capable of giving, and ready for a portfeuille,

having no canvas to incommode you at your next print shearing. I will send it rolled on a stick, by the first person I hear of going to town.

By the papers of the two last posts I am led to expect something has been already done which will decide whether poor England is mistress of the seas or no. I wait a line from you with impatience, for I know you don't stand upon the punctilio of letter for letter, which to me, who have no news to pay with, would be worse than the posting-tax. I hope however this ensuing race week, and Lord John Cavendish's company whom I expect to day, may make my next more worth postage; in the meantime thanking you for all your favours I rest or rather sleep

sincerely yours

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Arlington Street, Aug. 23, at night.

You may think what you please, but I am grieved to say that even more than the empire of the seas is at stake! At present the combined fleets are gone or blown from Plymouth, and the bells at Richmond rang last night as if they were gone to the bottom. The only conclusion to be drawn at this moment is, that they will fight Sir Charles Hardy before their embarkation takes place. By what I see much is to be apprehended from so little being apprehended, and from

the unaccountable intentions of a landing takes place, you would scarce believe half I could tell you. I did indeed this morning as I came to town, meet thirty six carriages with ammunition going to the west, not post, and yesterday they worked all day at the Tower, though Sunday. Is it pleasant to know that the fate of one's country may be decided in few weeks? My opinion is that the enemies will strike in every place they can. They threaten Minorca, and the French minister at Florence sent an order to the great duke by his valet de chambre not to admit English vessels into Leghorn, and it is supposed a like message has been delivered at Naples, though perhaps in a more decent manner.

You will see in the papers Lord Sandwich's incredulity of Sir Jacob Wheate's account of the combined fleets; when he gave the same relation to Neptune himself and happened to say, they were superior to ours, the quick answer was, "Oh, yes, I suppose they have four or five ships more."

I have not time nor disposition to write more, even now I have written affectedly, for I have suppressed the various kinds of indignation I feel, and I cannot write long to you unnaturally, yet it is below a man to rail, when England totters to its foundations. Disgraced it is for ever! in what piteous condition it may emerge I know not — if it does emerge — if it does not, happy they who do not live to see its utter destruction.

Yours to the last

H. WALPOLE.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Sep. 5, 1779.

What can I write when I know nothing, and believe little that I hear? Winds and naval manœuvres I do not understand. Every body contradicts every body, and each new moment the last. Last week the enemies were between our coast and our fleet, and that was bad. Now our fleet is at Portsmouth, and the enemies nobody know where, and this is bad. Sum total — we are in a very bad condition, where nothing mends it; it is lucky for you that I cannot crowd my thoughts into a letter, nor can chuse to which to give the preference. It is almost insupportable to see England fallen so low — fallen! It dashed itself down — no laws of gravitation could have thrown it so low in a century. It *would* strip itself of men, arms, wealth, fleets, to conquer what it possessed. It would force its friends to be its foes, that it might plunder them and prevent their continuing to enrich it, and then when a neutral power much more inclined to peace than war, would have extinguished the conflagration — bounce! you may be our enemy, too if you please. There!

There's room for meditation even to madness! I am very far from well in body too. All the summer I have been tormented off and on with the gout in one of my eyes, which is now quite removed, but in the garb of rheumatism has fallen on my hip, and confines

me to my house, so that I am a chaos of moral reflections. I am trying to extract an elixir of resignation, but as Cato and Brutus themselves allow one not to be perfectly philosophic that is indifferent, to the ruin of one's country, I am in a very christian mood about personal sufferings, but cannot find a text in the New Testament that bids me not care what becomes of England when I am gone; unless silence gives consent. Adieu!

yours most cordially

H. WALPOLE.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Sep. 14, 1779.

I received the print of Sir Nicholas last night by the coach, and thank you kindly.

I have not written very lately for two reasons. When disgrace arrives from every quarter, from east, west, south, what is to be said; secondly, I have been very ill, and have now only the use of one hand. First I had a disorder in my bowels, then an inflammation on my hip which ended in the gout in my elbow, knee and left hand. The two first went off so very quick, that I flattered myself the whole would — now I am hoping I shall be quit for one hand which is tolerably bad indeed. In one word and without deluding myself, but for the moment, it is evident that my constitution is extremely impaired, and presents but a

melancholy prospect for the rest of my life, which my increasing weakness will not probably allow to be long. Life, which I liked as well as most men, was indeed never less *aimable*. To linger on in illness were a pitiful wish to form, and to outlive the prosperity and glory of one's country were meaner still to wish. Wishing in fact decides nothing, and it is silly to say any thing about it, but, when the cast of one's mind is forced on those reflections, one is a very disagreeable correspondent.

That *ignis fatuus* of a brighter period, Lord Temple is dead. He was thrown out of a chaise on a heap of bricks, fractured his skull, was trepanned and died.

My indisposition will prevent my visit to Nuneham this month, which I had promised. I shall take care how I promise unless what I should not be sorry to be hindered from executing.

It is ridiculous in gouty sixty-two to make engagements, or undertake a journey, when at least one ought to put into one's chaise, a crutch, an hour-glass and a death's head. My heart to the last will hover about Nuneham, as one of the few spots it still dearly loves, for its own beauties and its excellent possessors. I can frame visions of how happy, how delighted I should have been, had they enjoyed it some years ago, when you, more Orpheus than Orpheus himself would have made the groves dance after your lyre and pencil, and rendered it what we fancy Penshurst was, but was not, and would have found a Sacharissa congenial to her Waller. I should have been proud to

have been Pursuivant to the house of Harcourt, and, but adieu visions I must form no more, and what is the theatre on which any man could form them now! Oh, what a weight of lead is the ruin of one's country.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

DEAR SIR, York, Sep. 18, 1779.

I am very sorry to find that your old enemy the gout has attacked you so early in the year, the winter was usually the time for his campaigns. I wish he may behave like the French and run away from you after he has just threatened what he is able to do with you. Am not I a true prophet with respect to these said French: did not I say they would prove our superiors in folly, and have they not done so? but they have disgraced us, and robb'd us of our naval honour; that is a matter we are too wise to regard.

As to myself though tolerably well in health, I have not spirits enough in this dull place to do any thing to the various unfinished things which I ought to finish, and therefore I have taken up your trade of book making, and have interleaved our old church anthem-book in order to write little anecdotes about the composers out of the *opus magnum* of your friend Sir John Hawkins. Don't abuse me, you have taken painting anecdotes to yourself, pray let me deal in musical

ones: Dr. Johnson you know has all poetical ones in fee simple, therefore I have nothing left me of the liberal arts but music, and that I will make the most of, and as Lord Orrery said that you could throw spirit into a catalogue, I shall aim at as arduous a thing, and endeavour to throw spirit into an Anthem-book.

I forget whether I told you in my last that this antient city is at present honoured with the company of Anti Sejanus. By pushing the *jus divinum* of tythes a little too far with his parishioners at Simonburne, they have made the place too hot to hold him, and therefore he has flung himself into York, in imitation of the Royal Martyr. Who knows but there may be a time when his patron, or even his patron's patron may follow his example. However let them come as soon as they please, I can tell them they must expect no favour from Anti Sejanus. He will arm every coffee house in the city against them for he already abuses them like fury. This however I have only from hearsay, for I have the prudence to keep out of his way, lest I also should be abused, because I was once a courtier and a King's chaplain.

I hope in your next to hear a better account of your health, which I am more earnest to hear than of a better account of my country, because the former is within the lines of possibility, and the other not. Adieu, my dear Sir, and believe me to be ever

most truly yours

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 28, 1779.

Though I am vexed at your lying fallow, I know not how to reprove it. With what spirit could an African Homer have finished an Hannibaliad when *delenda esset Carthago?* Horace and Virgil could prank away because they shared in the spoils of their country, yet you might imitate a worthier Roman, and instead of

turning your harp into a harpsichord,

you might like Tully, write *de finibus bonorum et malorum,* if the latter should meet their deserts; one would think it likely, when Anti Sejanus begins to demolish the statues of Sejanus.

I am sorry Paul Jones has exchanged *the Friths* for the coasts of Yorkshire for both reasons.

America is again to be conquered. Sir George Collier, having like the man mountain Gulliver, destroyed the whole naval force of the colonies at Penobscot, which being a famous port, of which I had never heard, I suppose is the Plymouth of Blefuscu. There is a post however lost of great consequence, but if the gazette does not own its importance, nobody will mind it.

When do you look southward? I am removing into my new house and am much pleased with it; of myself I can only say that for these two days I have mended. I am taking the bark, and think it is of service, but I have more ground to recover than is likely at sixty-two

and with so weak and shattered a frame, though the foundation is so strangely strong.

They are still writing *eloges* and verses on Voltaire at Paris, which would not be worth telling you, but as it has occasioned an admirable bon mot of Madame du Deffand, she said that Voltaire *subissoit le sort des mortels, d'être après leur mort la pâture des vers.* There is no adding anything to this, but that I wish you were here.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Oct. 21, 1779.

Perhaps you have been expecting that the combined fleets would take Ireland — perhaps they may, though not so easy, when a nation knows how to assert its rights; but in the mean time the Irish have chosen to take their kingdom into their own hands. They have twenty-eight thousand men in arms, *a committee* of whom attended the address to the Castle. I dare to say Mr. Edmund Burke does not approve of these proceedings, for the twenty eight thousand are all Protestants. He would, I suppose, have liked better the advice of the Honble and right reverend father in God, Dr. Frederic Hervey, Bishop of Derry, who told a person I know that he had proposed to the administration in England to take off the test from the Roman catholics; and though it was rejected, he told another person that it was to be taken off.

It looks as if the naval campaign were over, but I do not know. The re-settlement of the administration on the old bottom, only with some crossing over and figuring in, which you see in all the papers, I am told will take place.

You perceive by my date that I am removed into my new house. It is seeming to take a new lease of life. I was born in Arlington Street, lived there about fourteen years, returned thither, and passed thirty seven more; but I have sober monitors that warn me not to delude myself.

My four nieces are at Nuneham. I saw Mrs. Harcourt on Tuesday at Sion Hill, come up to kiss hands for Gen. Burgoyne's regiment; no doubt to the great joy of Bp. Butler. What charming children the little Carmarthens are.

I shall return to Strawberry on Monday for about a week, and then be chiefly in London. You will not tell me your own intended motions, and therefore I shall leave you to your own vagaries.

I heard t'other day of the *World as it goes*, a poem published last spring, but which I had never seen. It is by that infamous Combe, the author of the Diaboliad. It has many easy poetic lines, imitates Churchill, and is full as incoherent and absurd in its plan as the worst of the latter's. I do not wonder that it made no noise. Adieu! I send no compliments to your anthems, for I am not in charity with them.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

DEAR SIR, York, Nov. 12, 1779.

As I could not precisely tell you how I was to regulate my motions after the end of my residence which concluded yesterday, I deferred writing till the present month, when I have to tell you that my motions will be no motions for three months to come, as the Dean and Chapter have allowed me to take another residence immediately, by which means I save the expence and trouble of removing my family, and lay up for myself a year and three quarters of liberty, a great sum you will say of such a commodity which is at least equivalent to what the whole nation may promise itself the enjoyment of. However this be, I shall hope that while I remain in durance you will relieve and console me with your letters, which though I do not expect that the events which they relate will be of a comfortable cast, yet still they will be my very best amusement.

My Lord Carmarthen called upon me the other day in his return from the East riding of this great county, where he had reviewed the whole coast, and found it so totally defenceless that he had given a ball at Beverley on the occasion; he had withal added twenty men to the militia, and by the addition of two captains had metamorphosed a paltry battalion into a complete regiment; — a very great military manœuvre, and which I doubt not will be attended with the most salutary consequences to this part of the island, espe-

cially as the corps with which they are to be embodied is at Coxheath. From York he retired to Kiveton, where, if he pleases, he may make another ball, and invite Lady Conyers to it, who I don't doubt will be pleased with such a fête, for you must know, at Lady Holdernesse's request, I have lent her my parsonage to reside in, while Mr. Byron is raising recruits at Sheffield and Rotherham. This was by no means a pleasant sacrifice to make on my part, but I fancy you will think with me, that, as Lady Holdernesse asked it, I could not decently refuse.

I am at present revising and correcting a verse translation of Fresnoy's Art of Painting, which I began when I was a boy at the University and have since, at intervals of five and sometimes ten years, proceeded upon. I believe I shall now complete it, and I fancy you will like it as well as a thing so very didactic will be capable of being liked. I forget whether I ever shewed you any part of it; if not, pray do not set your stomach against it, for one day or other you must swallow the whole dose. I congratulate you on your removal to Berkeley Square. May you enjoy the comforts of your new situation as long as the Phidian work, which is placed in the centre of that square, continues to be its chief ornament. This is a new prayer of my own, which I offer up even with more zeal than I do that which the wisdom of the legislature has lately tagged to that about wars and tumults.

Amen.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Nov: 16, 1779,

Mr. Stonhewer wrote to you on business and could not get an answer, and was seriously alarmed that you was ill; I did not know whither to direct till you told me yesterday that you are hoarding a reversion of holidays at York; not very agreeable to me, who do not reckon on what is to accumulate; but in short, it is well you please me so much, for you often provoke me; so you do in translating Fresnoy. I do not care whether I shall like it or not; you will no doubt improve a middling poem, and what then? you will not insert a thousand new lights and ideas that you would have conceived if you had written a new poem on painting, which you understand better than Fresnoy. A mighty merit it would have been in Raphael, after the *Transfiguration* (pray mind that word) to have copied Giotto! You are original, and I will like none of your copies. I do feel for the adulteration of your parsonage; it is monstrously unpleasant to have one's house tumbled and dirtied by strangers — and yet I do not see how you could refuse.

What can I tell you of news and politics? just now we are arrived at a moment of *grim repose*. The combined fleets have not come forth — I imagine from much sickness and mortality. Sir Charles Hardy is crowing upon what may very properly be called his own dunghill. Though the French have given us

many sound blows, they have certainly not come half up to their boasting and possibilities — yet it is likely that they will wind up the campaign with the capture of New York and Arbuthnot's fleet, which will make our obstinacy for the recovery of America still more heroic. Firmness retires, where practicability finishes, and then obstinacy undertakes the business.

Ireland I believe will be brought to the same consistence, not with so much system and intention of driving it into rebellion, but — however we have so many data to go upon, that there would be no great honour in foretelling misfortunes.

There is another, and as yet little cloud about the sun, that may join and make other tempests come to explosion. Lord Gower has declared for resignation; Lord Weymouth wavers. I believe they have touched at many ports — I should be glad to see them shut out everywhere; whoever is betrayed and deserted by them, has at least the merit of not being a traytor and running away. Distress and dissatisfaction do begin to murmur everywhere. Men do perceive that they cannot live upon loyalty and dissipation. General Bourgoyne flatters himself that every body will forget their own sorrows to be occupied with his, I will allow Lord Gower and Lord Weymouth to be mightily touched for him, but beg to be excused myself. I cannot forget how ready he was to be a great favourite.

I have very lately heard an account of the eruption of Vesuvius, and one part that was quite new to me. The people rose and were on the point of burning the

theatre where the King was at the Opera — enraged at his insensibility.

Thank you for your prayer and your excellent account of Lord Carmarthen's review and ball.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Nov. I don't know what day.

If you can be content with any thing but news as fresh as mackarel, I will tell you as pretty a story as a gentleman can hear in a winter's day, though it has not a grain of novelty in it but to those who never heard it, which was my case till yesterday.

When that philosophic tyrant the Czarina (who murdered two emperors for the good of their people, to the edification of Voltaire, Diderot and Dalembert,) proposed to give a code of laws that should serve all her subjects as much, or as little as she pleased, she ordered her various states to send deputies who should specify their respective wants. Amongst the rest came a representative of the Samoieds; he waited on the marshal of the diet of legislation, who was Archbishop of Novogrod. I am come, said the savage, but I do not know for what. My clément mistress said, his grace, means to give a body of laws to all her dominions. Whatever laws the empress shall give us, said the Samoied, we shall obey, but we want no laws. How, said the prelate, not want laws! why you are men like the rest of the world, and must have the same passions,

and consequently must murder, cheat, steal, rob, plunder, &c. &c. &c.

It is true, said the savage, we have now and then a bad person among us, but he is sufficiently punished by being shut out of all society.

If you love nature in its naturalibus, you will like this tale. I think one might make a pretty Spectator by inverting the hint; I would propose a general jail delivery, not only from all prisons, but madhouses, as not sufficiently ample for a quarter of the patients and candidates; and to save trouble, and yet make as impartial distinction, to confine the virtuous and the few that are in their senses, but I am digressing, and have not yet told you the story I intended; at least, only the first part.

One day Count Orlow the Czarina's accomplice in more ways than one, exhibited himself to the Samoied in the robes of the order, and refulgent with diamonds. The savage surveyed him attentively, but silently. May I ask, said the favourite, what it is you admire! Nothing, replied the Tartar, I was thinking how ridiculous you are. Ridiculous, cried Orlow angrily; and pray in what? Why you shave your beard to look young, and powder your hair to look old.

Well! as you like my stories, I will tell you a third, but it is prodigiously old, yet it is the only new trait that I have found in that ocean the *bibliotheque des Romans*, which I had almost abandoned; for I am out of patience with novels and sermons, that have nothing

new, when the authors may say what they will without contradiction.

My history is a romance of the Amours of Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen of our Henry the second. She is in love with somebody who is in love with somebody else. She puts both in prison. The Count falls dangerously ill and sends for the Queen's Physician. Eleanor hears it, calls for the Physician and gives him a bowl which she orders him to prescribe to the Count, the doctor hesitates, doubts, begs to know the ingredients,— come, says her Majesty, your suspicions are jsut: it is poison — but remember, it is a crime I want from you, not a lecture, go and obey my orders: my Captain of the guard and two soldiers shall accompany you, and see that you execute my command, and give no hint of my secret, go, I will have no reply; the Physician submits, finds the prisoner in bed, his mistress sitting by. The doctor feels his pulse, produces the bowl, sighs, and says; my dear friend I cannot cure your disorder, but I have a remedy here for myself and swallows the poison.

Is not this entirely new? it would be a fine *coup de Theatre*, and yet would not do for a tragedy, for the Physician would become the hero of the piece, would efface the lovers: and yet the rest of the play could not be made to turn on him.

As all this will serve for a letter at any time, I will keep the rest of my paper for something that will not bear postponing.

20th.

Come, my letter shall go, though with only one new paragraph. Lord Weymouth has resigned, as well as Lord Gower. I believe that little faction flattered themselves that their separation would blow up Lord North, and yet I am persuaded that sheer cowardice has most share in Weymouth's part. There is such universal dissatisfaction, that when the crack is begun the whole edifice perhaps may tumble, but where is the architect that can repair a single story? The nation staid till every thing was desperate before it would allow that a single tile was blown off.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 29, 1779.

I desired Mr. Stonhewer on Saturday to write to you, and to tell you why I could not. From him or from the newspapers, who know every thing as well and as soon as anybody, you will have learnt that the edifice of the majority does not like the chief temple of the Philistines, rest on two slight pillars, which being removed, the whole fabric fell to pieces, but when pilasters take themselves for buttresses, no wonder they are mistaken. Such has been the fate of the Lords Gower and Weymouth, and I wish everybody saw them in as contemptible a light as I do. The last has attempted to avoid no degree of shame, for he is actually run away to Longleat. However

they do not give up the game, but have a matadore still to play a *black ace.*

So you think that we are still living on Thursday's debate and division! you are extremely mistaken, good Sir, we have fresh events every morning, not revolutions indeed, nor sea-fights, nor rebellions — all in good time. But we can furnish you every day with occurrences so strange and unexpected, that you folks in the country would live on a single one for three months — come what do you like? what do you chuse? Is not a sudden death very comfortable in a long winter's evening over a sea coal fire? or is a duel more to your taste? what young profligate would you wish hurried out of the world in an instant — I mean only as a beautiful flower that would close a sermon delicately, that you are composing on the debaucheries and gaming of the age? would not there be still more dignity in it, if he were a young peer? or shall he be a fashionable orator? or a grave judge — or shall he be all three? you are a little difficult Mr. Mason, and yet in these times much may be done to serve a friend, or what think you of a single combat seasoned with a little spice of premeditated assassination *à la* Sam Martin, which pray observe does not signify Saint Martin.

Well then I will try to please you if I can. Know then that on Saturday night one of His Majesty's Chief Justices in Eyre, after having vented a warm philippic on Thursday *against* the administration, and after having retired to his house at Epsom on Friday,

attended only by four virgins, whom he had picked up in the Strand, and after having supped plentifully on the said Saturday on fish and venison, finding himself indisposed, went to bed, rung his bell in ten minutes, and in one minute after the arrival of his servant, expired;—but what signifies sudden death without forewarning? he had said on Thursday that he should die in three days, had dreamt so and felt it would be so, on Saturday he said, if I outlive to day I shall go on, but enough of him: my next event is worth ten of this.

As Lord Lyttelton had spoken *against* the ministers, Mr. Adam, nephew of the Architects spoke *for* them. It is supposed that when ever Scotland was dissatisfied with—pho? I mean, not satisfied by Lord North, Adam was delegated to run at him; and now and then might have a plenary indulgence from the Pope for talking the language of opposition, in order to worm out secrets—poor souls! as if they had any!

Well, on Thursday he made a most absurd speech in favour of the court, which Charles Fox tore piecemeal with infinite humour and argument, which tortured the patient so much that next day he asked an explanation. Fox assured him he had meant nothing personal, but had a right to dislocate his arguments, and he was satisfied, but on Sunday he sent a Scotch Major to Fox to complain of the state of the debate in the newspapers, and to desire Mr. Fox would contradict and declare his good opinion of him. Fox returned for answer that he was not responsible for accounts in newspapers; that

it was harder still if on their misrepresentation he must give a good character of any man they abused: he again declared he had intended no offence, and that Mr. Adam was welcome to show that declaration to anybody. After consult had, Adam returned that Mr. Fox must print that recantation. "Hold," said Fox, "not so far neither"—Oh! I forgot the principal circumstance of all, Adam added that his *friends* would not be satisfied under less than publication. At eight this morning they went into Hyde Park, Fox with Fitzpatrick, Adam with his Major Humerstone for seconds; Adam fired, and the ball wounded Charles Fox's side, though very slightly; he then fired, missed, and said, "Now, Mr. Adam, are you satisfied?"

Near as you are to the Tweed you will not guess the reply, "No," said Adam, "You must still print your letter." Nothing could be more unjust, more unfair; they had fought because Fox would *not* consent to that pretension; Fox with the same firmness and temper with which he had conducted himself through the whole affair peremptorily refused, and the bloodhound again fired, but missed, and then Fox fired into the air and it ended.

An odd circumstance larded this history. Humerstone was waiting for him at Fox's house, and so was Sheridan, when Charles was come home and had dispatched the bravo, Sheridan said, "pray who is that ill looking fellow? he looks like the carrier of a challenge."

Well, I am sure I have made amends for having been

punished by the gout, and here too have I been writing in bed till eleven at night, but thank you I am better and was in the other room from twelve, till six to day, when my pains returned; yet finding them easier at nine, I was eager to be the first to tell you two such strange events. Half the town have been reading the latter correspondence in Charles Fox's room the whole morning, and I received it piping hot, except that I have abridged it a little, from a very accurate reporter. Adieu, or the bellman will be gone.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

DEAR SIR, York, Dec. 7, 1779.

I cannot enough thank you for your most friendly attention to me in combating even pain itself to give me pleasure by your correspondence. I assure you the pleasure I receive is great and I only lament that I can make you no return, for the dulness of this place is inconceivable. We are, however, going to bestir ourselves a little, and there are wheels in motion towards bringing this large county together to a general meeting, whether the measure will be carried into execution I am not yet certain, if it is, it will have this merit that it arises entirely from a set of private independent gentlemen without any lordly leader, whatever. Its object will be to consider the critical state of our landed property, &c. and to petition and perhaps remonstrate accordingly. I hear you say what will all this

signify? have you not petitioned and remonstrated before? and pray what came of them, true and as little will come of what we shall now do. I know all this; yet it will shew that we have not absolutely lost all feeling, and it will tend to put certain folks still more in the wrong. Last post brought me a weighty packet from my friend Fraser, so heavy that I wonder he was not ashamed to load the post with it. All however is not gold that is ponderous, twas Mr. Eden's letters to Lord Carlisle, and I have read them and am not comforted by them so much as his correspondent was either by them or his new sinecure. He tells us on the comfortless side that the combined fleets are much larger than ours; and in the very next page to comfort us that our present fleet is beyond compare the best in the world. Throw such comfort "to the dogs I'll none of it." All I can learn from it is that though we are already taxed more than ever we were, we are capable of paying still greater taxes, and therefore we ought to pay them freely without any retrospect to those who have of late imposed them to such ineffectual purpose. Suppose Lord Lyttelton had recovered the breaking of his blood-vessel and a physician had told him "my Lord, you lost two quarts of blood and the weakness of your blood-vessel was occasioned by your debaucheries. You ought therefore to go on in your debaucheries, because the human body contains many gallons of blood." His Lordship perhaps might have approved the advice, but I trust the nation are not all of them Lord Lytteltons. O mercy on me! a letter

just come from Alderson and he tells me that the west wind which blew so violently on Thursday night has tore off a great deal of my fine Westmoreland slate, that the slate in falling has broken all the panes in the very window of that best bed-chamber, where my Lady Conyers and Mr. Byron conjugally reposed. That not only my Lady but even her military spouse were greatly alarmed and obliged to quit their apartment, and that it still rains so violently that it is doubted whether the roof can be repaired before the inside ceiling is damaged. To this sad detail I hear you cry very composedly "a just judgment!" However, I find they are not so frightened but they will still keep their head-quarters at Aston, though Mr. Byron has received orders to remove his recruiting party to Beverly; which by the nearest roads (which are now impassable) is fifty miles, and by York above eighty. No matter, his Majesty's service will go on full as well as ever it did for all that, and so ends my Aston gazette extraordinary.

Believe me, dear Sir,
most cordially yours
W. MASON.

Pray in return give me a better account of your gout than I have of my house.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 11, 1779.

The very morning after I wrote to you last, the gout seized my right hand and still keeps possession, not that I have had any thing particular to tell you; the papers are full of, and accurate enough in debates, and by them majorities are no whit affected. The two seceding lords made a very silly figure; one has seceded from his own secession and speech, and the other from his secession into the country. M^c^ Donald, the former's son-in-law has made as absurd, though not as black a figure as Adam; he abused Lord North in very gross, yet too applicable terms, and next day pleaded he had been drunk, recanted, and was all admiration and esteem for his lordship's talents and virtues; so much for Parliament!

Lord Harcourt has told you a better anecdote than any of these: there is no improving upon it.

You bear the effects of the storm with great philosophy indeed, some folks, I see push old proverbs to both extremities and can touch nothing, but they bring a *new* house upon their heads. Old ones, however more solid, tumble too at a certain fatal touch. The removal of the south terrace at Windsor has endangered, aye, cracked that whole range of buildings, and the grantees of the lodgings have removed their goods and furniture lest all should be crushed.

I am glad you have tasted of Mr. Eden's four plates

of Blanc Manger stewed with carraway comfits. Though they must have soon palled your stomach, never was such an insipid *entremêts* dished up by a gentleman confectioner.

Mr. Tickell's hodge-podge of Partrides and House of Commons is as silly, though afterwards, here and there there are eight or ten pretty lines. I have read Sheridan's Critic, but not having seen it, for they say it is admirably acted, it appeared wonderously flat and old, and a poor imitation; it makes me fear I shall not be so much charmed with the School for Scandal, on reading, as I was when I saw it.

If you can send us any stories of ghosts out of the North, they will be very welcome; Lord Lyttelton's vision has revived the taste, though it seems a little odd that an apparition should despair of being able to get access to his lordship's bed in the shape of a young woman, without being forced to use the disguise of a robin redbreast.

If your County remonstrate, it will be met halfway by the South; they talk of a like rebuke from Hampshire, where there is already a sturdy opposition to the court candidate, as there is in Devonshire too. Ireland I fear is going much faster, but with what are not we threatened? yet perseverance in the American war is at this moment avowed! Is it possible to write on, when one has told you the excess of distraction.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley-square, Christmas Day, 1779.

I suppose this will find you like a true reformer in the midst of anathemas and minced pies. I am sorry the great Barons who would not budge a foot while they had any dormant hopes of favour, are coming to put their sickle into the fruits of your plough. Mr. Fred. Montagu was so obliging as to call on me and offer to carry any letter to you: but, at that time I was not able to scratch out a line, as I do now, even with a swaddled hand, and in truth with so much difficulty that I could engrave as expeditiously: I have had a relapse, though a slight one, and called it only a *codicil* to my gout: Mr. Gibbon said very well, "but I fancy it is not in consequence of your *will*." Lord Bristol has outran me, and leaves an Earl, Bishop, and a Countess Duchess. Have you seen in yesterday's Public Advertiser a good collection of applications to public characters from Tom Thumb, like those with which we were so pestered last year from Shakespeare. The last, on the bigamist Maid of Honour I have just mentioned, is one of the happiest quotations I ever saw: —

> A Maid like me Heaven formed at least for *two*;
> I married him — and now I'll marry you.

I find the graving tool too laborious, and must quit it, and as I have given my Secretary leave to go and keep his Christmas, this must be only a note, not

that I had any thing new to tell you if I could have continued.

Yours, &c.

HORACE WALPOLE.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

York, Dec. 28, 1779.

I am shocked to think that when you put yourself to so much pain in writing to me I should not be more frequent in my return of letters; but if ever any man had a good excuse, I have one at present. Look only at the inclosed list,— the last that will be published,— count only the names, and consider how very active a small committee must have been to have collected these in the space of a fortnight. I do not think that any measure of the kind was ever carried on to this point with greater success; but beyond this point I can frame but little conjecture. The great Barons pour in upon us to morrow to do precisely what you say they will do. Could this have been prevented (and yet all we could do was done to prevent it) I have no doubt our conclusion would have been as prosperous as our beginning. What this conclusion turns out to be, you shall hear as soon as I know it. Excuse the greatest haste, and believe how heartily I wish you a speedy recovery.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

DEAR SIR, York, Dec. 31, 1779.

All that I can have time to tell you more than you will read here in print is that there was a very slight opposition began by Mr. Cholmley (who married Smelt's daughter) and seconded by a school boy declamation of Mr. Drummond's. Smelt himself (warm from the royal bosom of his gracious master) gave us a long harangue, beginning with a string of egotisms, and afterwards resigning in form his own Pension: then declaring too *totidem verbis*, that instead of decreasing the power of the crown, we ought to give it a great deal more power, that the king was the soul of the state, the best patriot, nay, the only patriot in the nation, that we ought to be taxed a great deal more, (for which he was hissed by the yeomanry,) that all our calamities arose from the opposition, who tore off the sacred veil which always ought to envelope the sovereign; and a great deal more trash which served the cause he meant to attack more than any other speech could have done. He was afterwards ridiculed paragraph by paragraph, by Mr. Spencer Stanhope, member for Carlisle, with great effect. Sir G. Savile being called upon by one of the Poachers, of which there were a great many, gave us an excellent speech, and though the Petition was carried nem. con. there were two faint noes by Smelt and his friend Matt Dodsworth, on which I wished to call a division but

without effect. You will find by the resolves that we are still as active as if the Petition was yet in embrio, and shall continue so till Easter Tuesday, so that it is hardly possible this Petition can be treated as others have been, especially if other counties join of which we have the most sanguine expectations. The spirit if not the exact letter of Smelt's speech will I hope soon be published, and if any thing can, it will astonish you by its impropriety. He has torn the veil with a vengeance.

Yours, in great haste,

W. MASON.

Pray shew this to Lord Harcourt; I have not time to write more, and for this you see I have used an amanuensis to copy what I had before written to another correspondent.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Jan. 4, 1780.

I always perceived a striking resemblance between you and Milton:—

I thought so once but now I know it—

why, you are an agitator, a sequestrator, and one of the committee of safety, one does not know to treat you with reverence enough. I would write to you with my hat off, if I ever put it on; and therefore could

only do as my namesake uncle did, who being met walking near the Hague by the Spanish Embassador on a proud Isabella Jennet, who descended to make a bow, the latter said he could not return the compliment unless Don Guzman would lend him his horse that he might mount, dismount and make his obeysance. Poor Mr. Smelt: how one may hurt a man by serving him: I like your committee's thanking the Barons for their appearance, which was a very civil way of marking the impertinence of their intrusion. They would have made a party-affair of what was the result of feeling for the distresses and disgrace of the nation, but alas! here is the nation plunged deeper still. Yesterday came an express from Captain Fielding, who has brought a Dutch Fleet into Plymouth, and yet has missed his aim, which was to seize stores going to the Brest Fleet essential to its requipment. Those requisites were masts and timber, instead of which he has only captured hemp and iron. Whether the more material articles have escaped, or have not yet ventured out, I do not know; nor do I relate the particulars of the rencounter, which I have heard variously related, and which seem to have consisted of ceremonious salutations by the mouths of cannon rather than hostile attacks. No sooner do we breathe in Ireland than we open a new tempest with Holland; is it possible that we should not sink in this ocean of troubles! you who are so sanguine and spirited, have you any hopes of England rising again? I who have lately passed so many solitary hours of pain and re-

flexion, see no distant ray of recovery. In vain that selfish uncomfortable question occurs "what is it to thee, poor Skeleton, what is the future fate of thy country? the churchyard at Houghton will not be narrower than it is." Still the love of that country, of its liberty and prosperity will be uppermost, and grief for its fall, and as there is little left for me, but to sit and think, but you are not in so despondent a mood, and you shall have no more of my meditations, I will change the theme. Some foolish friend, who by the way can not measure a verse, has published some paltry poems of the last Lord Lyttelton, that appear genuine, and discover no parts, which I have long believed he had not. There is a prefatory defence of his character, the badness of which the officious editor comprises in the love of women and gaming; and which were virtues compared with his other faults.

My hand has written its dose and must repose. I have not seen Lord Harcourt these ten days, so probably shall soon, for I do not yet go abroad. Do you mean to hatch all your eggs in the North, and have you abandoned your intention of coming to town.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 17, 1780.

No disparagement to your political labours for saving a state that cannot be saved (for I look on the deathbed repentance of a nation as I do on that of a simple

mortal) I had rather have written one line about a watch,

that tick tacks obstinately right,

than have cleansed the Augean meuse. I do not mean to exhort you to do nothing but describe the movements of watches and clocks as long as you live like the mechanic, who made the serpent in Orpheus and Eurydice, and ruined himself by making nothing but serpents of all sizes till he was in the Fleet. As little do I mean to depreciate the *one line's* twin brothers and sisters — no, had it as many as the Countess of Holland's issue, — but one perfect line as brilliant as Pitt's diamond can efface a jeweller's whole shop ; and I suppose that in Mahomet's Paradise every true believer will fling his handkerchief to one of the houries in preference to all the rest. This is my case, and next to the one line I am delighted with the universality of your talents, (excepting that one for idleness) and I admire how you can by turns play on all instruments, whether lyres, celestinettes, or country Gentlemen, and make harmony out of them all. You might be organist to the Spheres, for you make Whigs and Tories, *and high cathedral-men,* (a better word than *churchmen*) and Presbyterians move in concert, though as distant as Saturn and the Moon — stay, I should have inverted the order of my planets to make the application more just : for though grim Saturn's belt and satellites strike one at first as proper accompaniments to an allusion to high cathedral men, yet I must give the preference to the Moon as still more consonant to the

character of *Mother cathedral*, which adheres to the earth as its centre, and only moves round the sun in compliment to and in company with her sovereign.

I have received all your journals with gratitude, and can distinguish where you have *smelted* and refined the materials; but I find I am in a very rhapsodical, that is nonsensical, mood, and therefore I will try to be a little more sober, though your Aganippean water gets into my head and makes me as drunk as the royal beautifying fluid has made a poor deputy Mentor, though only outwardly applied.

I have no news for you but the shocking death of Hans Stanley, who, in a sudden fit of frenzy went out of the house at Althorpe last Thursday, and cut his throat in the public road, as his father did in bed with his wife.

There is a Dutch Scavant come over who is author of several pieces so learned, that I do not know even their titles, but he has made a discovery in my way which you may be sure I believe, for it *proves* what I had suspected, and hinted in my Anecdotes of Painting, that the use of oil colours was known long before Van Eyck. Mr. Raspe the discoverer has found a MS. of one Theophilus, a German monk in the eleventh century, who gives receipts for preparing the colours. There are copies of this work written in infernal Latin, in the libraries at Wolfenbottle and Leipsick, in the King of France's, and two at Cambridge, which Raspe has transcribed. He has found too a like treatise of one Heraclius. They are very much in the manner of

Salmon's works. Raspe writes in English, much above ill, and speaks it as readily as French; and he proves that Vasari on bad or no information, was the first who ascribed the invention of oil painting to Van Eyck an hundred years after his death. Raspe is poor, and I shall try to get subscriptions to enable him to print his work, which is sensible, clear and unpretending.

Pray read a little book no bigger than a silver penny, called a Christmas box for *me*—yes for *me*. It is a story that is no story, or scarce one; it is a sort of imitation of Voltaire, and yet perfectly original; there is nature, character, simplicity, and carelessness throughout, observation without pretensions, and I believe, a good deal of truth in some of the incidents, that I take to have happened. My vanity may have interested me too much, though I see it as a thing not likely to please; but if you read it *twice* which its brevity will easily allow, I think you will see real merit in it, especially when you know the author is young.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Jan. 22, 1780.

I like much your Essay on the Celestinette, which I have this minute received. Proceed, and say all that timid critics would be afraid to say. Show all the blunders and faults of the old masters, and prove that there can be no music, but by exploding prejudices, and by restoring ancient harmony.

I cannot write more now, for one of my fingers, which has long been a quarry of chalkstones, and has been and is terribly inflamed with this last fit, has burst, and is so sore that I can scarce hold the pen. I muster all the resolution and spirits I can, but the latter often sink with the prospect I have before me of increasing pain and infirmity. To talk of prospect is seeming to reckon on old age as a permanency; but in the light I see it with its probable concomitants, be assured I do not brood with luxury over that chance!

Kirgate I cannot employ, for he is gone to Strawberry to print some verses of Mr. Miller. *Oui, veritablement*, of Mr. Charles Miller, and very pretty they are. I shall send them to you, though not as an adequate recompence.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Jan. 29, 1780.

Here are Mr. Miller's verses. His poetry, it seems, was no secret to you. It is easy, and he has an ear.

Your tenant's late husband has resigned. Have you much joy in such a convert? ° °

Hans Stanley has left various works: one is a defence of our seizing the French ships previous to the last war. It is a dialogue in imitation of Tully's philosophic works, and is written in *Latin* too. Do you wonder he cut his throat? I formerly was obliged to read a poem of his in three cantos at Lady Hervey's,

and what was fifty times worse, *before him*. It was the Ninth Statue from the Arabian Nights, and in imitation of Dryden's Fables. Whether good or bad you may imagine, I cannot tell,— I was to stop and admire, and very likely did — at the worst lines in it. Awkward he was, and brayed, but I never knew why he could not read his own work. He was now translating Pindar, and had fetched Dr. Potter to town to supervise it.

Lord George Gordon has had an audience of the king, and read an Irish pamphlet to him for above an hour, till it was pitch dark, and then exacted a promise on honour that his Majesty would finish it; he did, and then went to skait. It is impossible to wind up a letter higher.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, St. Charles's Day, Jan. 1780.

I wrote to you last night, and must write to you again, though I do not know whether you have leisure or inclination to attend to the idle occupations with which I am forced to amuse myself, as I seldom now stir out of my own house.

This morning, turning over the second volume of the new Biographia, I found the following precious sentence in the last additional note to the life of Dr. Bentley, communicated by the ingenious Mr. Cumberland, who giving an account too of his uncle Mr. Bentley's,

writings, *because* the latter has the honour of being related to *him*, says, speaking of Philodamus, "it was esteemed by the late eminent poet, Mr. Gray, to be one of the most capital poems in the English language. *Accordingly*, Mr. Gray wrote a laboured and elegant commentary upon it, which abounds with wit, and is one of his best productions." I say nothing of the excellent application of the word *accordingly*, nor of the false English in the last *which*, which should refer to it, and not as he means it should, to *commentary*, nor to the pedantic and Bentleian epithets of *laboured and elegant*, terms far below any thing of Gray's writing, and only worthy of prefaces written by witlings who are jealous of, and yet compliment, one another; but *laboured* I dare to swear it was not, and for the wit of it, though probably true, Cumberland of all men living, is the worst judge, who told me it was pity Gray's letters were printed as they disgraced him. I should be glad to see what this Jackadandy calls a commentary, and which I suppose was a familiar letter, and perhaps a short one, for Gray could express in ten lines, what the fry of Scholiasts would make twenty times as long as the text.

Mr. Cumberland, full as ingenuous as he is ingenious, has barely mentioned the edition of his grandfather's Lucan, which, with singular veracity, he says that he, Mr. Cumberland, published. The truth of which veracity is exactly this: the MS. of the notes, I believe, was in Cumberland's possession, who gave it to his uncle for the latter's benefit, and for that latter's benefit I printed

it at Strawberry Hill, entirely at my own expense, found the paper, and as it was at least a year printing, and I had but one printer at a guinea a week, it cost me above fifty guineas. Mr. Bentley alone selected and revised the notes, and he and I revised the proof-sheets; and as Mr. Bentley did not choose, for reasons best known to himself or to his nephew, to appear the editor, Cumberland's name was affixed to the dedication, which, with the gift of the MS., entitled him I suppose to the right of calling it *his* publication, — an honour however which I shall not contest with him, I am no more jealous of such jackdaw's feathers, than I was flattered by them, when Bishop Pearce complimented me on publishing *Learned Authors,* for so he thought Lucan, because he wrote in what is foolishly called *one of the learned languages*: called so at first, no doubt, by one of those dunces who call themselves *learned men.* Did I ever tell you a ridiculous blunder that happened to our edition by Mr. Bentley's and my carelessness. He had chosen for the motto a note out of the MS., in which were these words, *Multa sunt condonanda in opere postumo,* so they stand in the title page, but alas! Mr. Bentley had rejected the note, and thus the motto quotes a note not to be found in the edition. He did not recollect he had done so, and I never searched for the note till after the edition was published.

Well: I am but expunged out of the list of printers: you are to be dethroned as an author. Mr. Cumberland has written a *laboured* and *elegant drama,* which by

the title I concluded was to be very comical, and more likely to endanger the celebrity of Aristophanes, than of any living wight: it is called *The Widow of Delphi, or the Descent of the Deities*, and I am told is to demolish the reputation of Caractacus. A *précis* of the subject was published two days ago in the Public Advertiser for the benefit of the *illiterati*, who are informed that poor Shakespeare was mistaken in calling the spot of the scene *Delphos*, instead of *Delphi*. I hope there will be a dance of Cyclopses (I don't know whether commentators will allow that termination) hammering, by the order of Venus, armour to keep the author invulnerable, who has hitherto been terribly bruised in all his combats with mortals. He is as sore as a tetter, yet always blundering into new scrapes.

I have heard of something you received and suppressed, and I adore your temper, prudence and virtue. For God's sake, be always as firm; let us have nothing that squints that way. I doubt whether it ever ought to be the *ratio ultima* of any cause. I am sure it ought never to be the first ratio of the best cause; and it is certain that only the worst has generally been the better in the end for that *ultima ratio*. Adieu!

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, March 22, 1780.

Monday, the day you left London exhibited a scene that has already produced martial consequences, or a

second part to the History of Adam and Charles Fox. I do not mean the ministerial victory in defence of the Household: no, I speak of a single combat. Mr. Fullerton, Lord Stormont's late Secretary at Paris, broiling over the censure passed on him and his regiment in the House of Lords by the Duke of Richmond and Lord Shelburne, particularly the latter, took advantage of the estimate of the army to launch out into a violent invective on the Earl, whom he named, but was stopped by Ch. Fox and Barré. Not content, nor waiting to see if Lord Sh. would resent, he sent the latter an account of what he not only had said but intended to have said, if not interrupted; the sum total of which was to have been that his Lordship's conduct had been a compound of insolence, cowardice and falsehood — very well, but to heap indiscretion on passion, he reproached Lord Shelburne with having as *he had heard abroad*, kept a correspondence with the enemies of his country. My Lord replied, that the best answer he could give, was to desire Mr. F. would meet him the next morning in Hyde Park at five o'clock. They met accordingly: Lord Frederick Cavendish was the Earl's second; Lord Balcarras, Fullerton's. Lord Shelburne received a ball in the groin, but the wound is slight and he was so cool, that being asked how he did, he looked at the place, and said, "why I don't think Lady Shelburne will be the worse for it." This second Scotch extravagance will serve to balance Sir Fletcher's and Temple Lutterell's late absurdities. I wish I knew what would repair one

that I have seen to day, Mr. Wyvil's Manifesto. You told me he was a sensible man; how could he set his name to such a performance, which I hear is drawn by a Mr. Bromley? I never saw such a composition of obscurity, bombast, and futility, nor a piece so liable to be turned into ridicule. The third paragraph beginning *let any man look back to the laws,* I read two or three times before I could guess at the meaning. In the next appears this fustian sally, *the enormous, the compactly accumulated, the all devouring influence of the Crown.* Why your Yorkshire squires must think the Giant of Wantley is come again to swallow houses and churches like geese and turkeys! The vague and indefinite manner of stating the resolutions at the end, and which betrays a consciousness of their impropriety, destroys all the buckram that was crouded into the rest of the memorial; and the waving annual Parliaments, till all is done that annual Parliaments are pretended to be wanted to do, is such retrograde or topsyturvy logic as will give nobody a higher idea of the legislator.

In short, my dear friend, we shall lose all the benefit of the present spirit by the whimsies of men that have not common sense, nor can express even what they mean. The candidates are to satisfy the electors by signing the association or *otherwise,* — a very definite sentence indeed in a decree of a tribunal that sets itself to change the Constitution! Mercy on us! were there not faults enough to amend, but we must leave them, aye let the people forget them, and turn their heads

with points that will engender endless litigation and dispute! Bring them back I beseech you if you can to some sobriety, or depend upon it, the cause will grow ridiculous. Such innovations dictated by deputies of thirteen Counties at a tavern in London and announced in so wretched a manner and with so little argument can but be a joke. An arbitrary addition of an hundred members at once without any deliberation or discussion, and including Scotland whether it will or not, and of which not a single County has petitioned, is surely very unwise, but I will say no more. I lament the misapplication of the Nation's returning sense, we shall be lost in controversy on speculative points, and the court will call itself defenders of the Constitution by resisting such unprecedented methods of altering it.

Dr. Warton was so kind as to call on me this morning and made me very happy, as I was glad to be acquainted with Gray's friend. He was three hours yesterday at Strawberry Hill with Mr. Stonhewer. I did not intend to pursue you so soon, but I could not resist telling you of the duel. However, I will not continue to interrupt you but on good occasions, as I trust to your abilities for managing your wild associates.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, April 7, 1780.

I conclude you are now returned to your cure of *souls*, and will be consequently at more leisure, and

that one may hear from you. In the mean time you will be glad to hear of the Opposition's victory on the Petitions last night, when they had a majority of eighteen. The sixth of April ought for ever to be a red lettered day, and at least as solemn a festival as the 29th of May, for the question carried was, that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increased, and *ought to be diminished.* I adopt the whole sentence into my revolution-creed, and would have added to Magna Charta, that whenever that influence has increased and is increasing, it ought to be diminished. In truth, after the five last years I did not imagine there was vigour enough left in *old* England to take such a jump backwards; but it confirms me more firmly in my opinion that the medium of wisdom consists in restoring the Constitution and not in trying tricks upon it. Reinstate it in its rights, bind them tight with ribs of brass, consecrate with the most solemn religion the sacredness of juries, of the Habeas Corpus, and of the liberty of the press; but innovate not on the person of parliaments — and for the swelling the number of representatives, I abominate the doctrine. I have an objection of great weight with me, that I will not utter in a letter that may be opened. For written engagements and annual parliaments, I am clear that the first are often abused, and as likely to be turned against the authors, and for the second, they would soon annihilate the dignity of parliament, or grow such a nuisance that very likely prerogative would be adopted as a counter-poison.

I shall die in these sentiments as corollaries to those in which I have lived, for I shall not see the event of my predictions. I have been very ill the beginning of this week, and felt as if I had something of an universal palsy, which I suppose was fancy, which I suppose was nervous, which I suppose was caused by the bitter east, but in short a very frail tenement is tumbling, and what signifies whether it is toppled down by wind getting in at the garret window, or by the crumbling of the foundations?

I have gotten three comfortably fat volumes in octavo of ancient French Fabliaux, but they look more good humoured from their corpulency than from intrinsic gaiety, as many plump men do. The fables are trite as that of patient Grisel; and the notes, which are the best part, as full of antique usages, are mortally heavy and devoid of taste; but I think you will like to see them, and will send them when I have gone through them, if you will point out a conveyance. But I am diverted at present to a larger and stupendously magnificent work about nothing, only two uncommonly tall quartos containing the memoires of that singular being Thomas Hollis; a most excellent man, a most immaculate whig, but as simple a poor soul as ever existed, except his editor, who has given extracts from the good creature's diary, that are very near as anile as Ashmole's. There are thanks to God for reaching every birthday, prayers for continuance in virtue and nobleness of designs, and thanks to Heaven for her Majesty's being delivered of a third or fourth prince,

and God send he may prove a good man; and continual apprehensions of designs of the Jesuits against him. Then there are faithful journals of the days on which he went to such a bookseller's, and bought such a set of books, which he gave to such a public library! This is all splendidly printed and decorated with cuts by Cipriani and Bartolozzi, and with fine prints of all our saints, Algernon Sydney, Milton, Locke, &c. In short imagine the history of an old woman that goes to a mercer's to buy a bombazine with etchings of the deaths of Brutus and Cassius.

You will not soon, I doubt, see in print the tracts of Theophilus and Eraclius *de arte pingendi.* I had begun to gather subscriptions, but poor Raspe is arrested by his taylor. I have sent him a little money, and he hopes to recover his liberty, but I question whether he will be able to struggle on here.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

DEAR SIR, Aston, April 9, 1780.

Things went at York so differently from what I knew you would wish that I could not prevail on myself to give you any account of them, and though I think I could have defended the good opinion I entertain of Mr. Wyville (who certainly cannot be called a fool because he assented to a majority who espoused a foolish memorial, which that majority would have carried the publication of in spite of him) yet I thought

it better to let you have the account of the whole proceeding from the papers, and have only to add that you may depend upon it the general sense of the County is for supporting the measures they have adopted, and therefore certain of our friends have lost much popularity by not concurring in those measures. Whether rightly or wrongly time must shew, for my part I only feel chagrin and disappointed. What can be said of men who after proving that there has been a waste of public money for the purposes of parliamentary corruption to such enormous excess as would almost authorise a civil war, tell you very coolly, "that it is too rash a step to aim at a parliamentary reform." But I know we shall not agree on this subject, and and therefore I drop it. All I have to add at present is that I beg you would direct your letters to me at Aston, near Worsop, because a new post from thence to Sheffield now passes my door three times a week. Thrice in this week has the snow covered my little copse, and thrice melted, yet under an atmosphere as cold as Christmas, no grass and hardly any vegetation, yet my guests were flown, my house warm, and I feel at present in tolerable composure. A line from you at all times is one of my best treats, believe me, dear Sir,

most truly yours

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, April 17, 1780.

You have sent me so temperate and obliging a letter, that I most certainly will not dispute with you, what I never wish to do. I will not say a word more on the novel articles. In fact they cease to alarm me, for they are generally distasted, and not likely to make their fortune. The counties of Northampton, Buckingham, Cambridge and Wiltshire have rejected them, though Wilts is Lord Shelburne's province, but he I know and Charles Fox were utterly against them, and only complied for the moment. In short it was a disastrous project, has disgusted many of the opposition and thence delighted the court, who triumph on Mr. Wyvil's attempt to remove subscription of the 39 articles, and who now would impose tests, subscriptions and engagements to arbitrary and indigested plans of his own.

I am sorry for what you tell me of the new unpopularity of certain persons, not for their sakes, for can they regard it? Are honest conscientious men to lose credit with their countrymen for not swallowing implicitly any crude and disputable propositions that any man takes for an infallible nostrum. What measures of a court could be more despotic? And allow me to say that any man who would dictate to a whole party, ought to have given proofs of consummate abilities before he assumes so dictatorial a tone, and certainly

before he will have his mission universally acknowledged.

In good faith, my dear Sir, it requires no great sagacity to foresee that such rashness and obstinacy will soon split the opposition into an hundred petty factions. The court is one compact body and uniform. The opposition is a most heterogeneous assemblage; and as the great man who is to conduct them, has not yet appeared, I doubt that without much discretion and address, the present spirit will degenerate, and be lost in flippant projects that will clash with each other, and whose leaders will hate each other more than their common enemies. Your good sense must bridle those under your diocese, and even if you think my advice not sound, it may not be useless to have some too circumspect, as well as others too enterprizing. The recovery of a majority of 26 last week by the administration shows how little cordiality there was in the defection of the Tories. They are no doubt but temporizing with their constituents; perhaps have dispensations, and certainly would have them for taking engagements, which they would not observe when their elections were secured. Some Whigs deserted too, because their electors are officers of revenue. In short I have said enough to lead you to reflect what variety of interests ought to be weighed, before disputable questions are converted into articles of faith. It is good an army should be warm, but the generals ought to be very cool.

The House of Lords has rejected the Contractor's

Bill, a measure rash enough on their side, unless, as I suspect, they have received new assurances from the Tories. A strange event has suspended the consequences of that rejection, I mean the Speaker's retirement. It is generally thought his successor will be your friend Frederic Montagu.

Mr. Hollis's Memoirs are not published but sent as presents to the elect. They are certainly drawn up by some Dissenter, yet though often silly, vulgar, ignorant and prejudiced, they contain some curious facts. They show how the Episcopalian spirit of that arch-hypocrite Secker contributed to the American War, and there is one remarkable anecdote breathing the full effluvia of the reign: Mr. Hollis sent to the British Museum a satirical print on the Jesuits. The Trustees would not receive it.

You have seen the Russian Declaration, I conclude. The European Powers will probably oblige us to acknowledge the Independence and free trade of America, it will be kinder than they intend it to us and will give repose to those poor sufferers, whom our country gentlemen devoted to destruction, and do not seem even in their hour of resipiscence to recollect.

I am glad you have recovered your Lares and Penates, but don't you find them a little more wanton than you left them? I hope before you commence your fourth book, that you will not be forced to purify your walks from the Deity of gardens.

My last was sent by Rotherham, not having received your new route. Adieu.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, April 25, 1780.

It is not to boast of sagacity that I tell you that I have guessed rightly. The Tories have returned to the court, and gave it yesterday a great majority on Dunning's motion for an address against proroguing or dissolving the parliament till grievances were redressed. The motion was rejected by 254 to 203. Sir Roger Newdigate, who has affected to have opened his prerogative eyes, though he owned he detested those to whom he had gone over, voted with many other true-blue friends in the majority. The Tories of Cheshire have played as signal a trick. I knew, when they were set down as subscribers to the association that they had sent no deputation thither, and if any body presented himself there as deputed, that it was without authority and only from zeal. This is not to dispute, but to justify myself to you for having been less sanguine than you. I remember a notorious instance of Tory treachery to Lord Holland in the late reign, the particulars of which are too long for a letter. I have not so much spirit as you, and experience and age have made me still more diffident, but they do not shake my principles. They are even more firm on finding we are thus beaten; deceived I have not been, for I expected no better from an alliance with Tory country gentlemen, who hallooed the crown to ravage America, and then attacked it because they had been such gulls.

However I rejoice that they have shown themselves, the crown must doat on them as much as I do.

I was going to send you Fitzpatrick's excellent parody of George Selwyn's advertisement to his electors at Gloucester, but I find it is in to-day's Courant and will certainly get into the other papers. In its room I will transcribe a riddle, not with all its mysteries, for then it would be inexplicable. The ghosts of Odin and Gray must pardon my speaking so irreverently of what they alone could expound. This fragment I believe genuine, for the editor has not made it dance to Macpherson's hornpipe, nor pretends that there are clergymen living in the Highlands who have been able to say it by heart for these thousand years. This is an Icelandic stanza, the English of which says, Dr. Uno Von Troil is "I hang the round beaten gaping snake on the end of the bridge of the mountain bird at the gallows of Odin's shield."

The sense of this nonsense is a Mr. Ihre affirms, "I put a ring on my finger," I do not lessen the enigma by giving you the solution, for now you are to make out *how* that can be. If you can, you deserve to be poet Laureate of Hecla, for Dr. Von Troil says, there were poets Laureate in Iceland, though they have no laurel, nor any thing else but volcanos and boiling fountains, some of scarlet, and some as white as milk. As you know I love poetry with images entirely new, you would oblige me with a pastoral in which should be a description of this landscape, and which Mrs. Cornelys if still living, shall convert into a ridotto.

I am but just come to town and know nothing else; you can have nothing of a cat but her politics and her studies. Adieu.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

The newspapers have told you all that I could have said, and that nothing has happened worth repeating or detailing. The spirit you *raised* is evaporated or split into a thousand branches by mismanagement. The opposition is as much divided amongst themselves, as they and the ministers; and those squabbles more than any other cause have re-established the predominance of the court. The Bishop of St. Asaph showed me a sensible letter from his son, the dean, who says, it was with much difficulty that he prevailed to have the committee of their county adjourned, and that it would have been infallibly dissolved if he had pressed the association. In short, I can only lament that the sole chance we have had in so many years of recovering the vigour of this country has been thrown away. The ministers, though detesting each other more than the factions in the opposition, have had the sense not to quarrel, and they reap the benefit of *unanimity*, which we professed and could not observe for a moment.

Did you see *Royal Reflections;* they are excellent, and I am persuaded were written by Fitzpatrick. The courtiers are restringing their lyres too. There is an ode, said to be written by Soame Jenyns, and I believe

so from one or two strokes of humour, though in general a paltry performance. The preface is an attack on Gray and you, who I am sure are our only Pindars. The conclusion ironically implores liberty:

> To shield us safe, beneath her guardian wings,
> From Law, Religion, Ministers and Kings.

Soame Jenyns does think, I do not doubt, that ministers ought to be our law, and kings our religion. When you are in your own-*issime* vein, I trust you will remember him.

You know, I suppose, that the Royal Academy at Somerset House is opened. It is quite a Roman palace, and finished in perfect taste as well as boundless expense. It would have been a glorious apparition at the conclusion of the great war; now it is an insult on our poverty and degradation. There is a sign post by West of his majesty holding the memorial of his late campaign, lest we should forget that he was at Coxheath when the French fleet was in Plymouth Sound. By what lethargy of loyalty it happened I do not know, but *there* is also a picture of Mrs. Wright modelling the head of Charles the First, and their majesties contemplating it. Gainsborough has five landscapes there, of which one especially is worthy of any collection, and of any painter that ever existed.

There is come out a Life of Garrick, in two volumes, by Davies the bookseller, formerly a player. It is written naturally, simply, without pretensions, nay and without partiality (though under the auspices of Dr.

Johnson) unless, as it seems, the prompter reserved all the flattery to himself, and according to an epigram on the late Queen and the Hermitage:

——— whispered let the incense all be mine.

In consequence the author calls the pedant the greatest man of the age, and compares his trumpery tragedy of Irene to Cato. However the work is entertaining and deserves immortality for preserving that *sublime* saying of Quin (which, by the way, he profanes by calling it a *bon mot*) who disputing on the execution of Charles I, and being asked by his antagonist by what law he was put to death, replied, *by all the laws he had left them.* I wish you would translate it into Greek, and write it in your Longinus; it has ten times more grandeur, force and meaning than anything he cites.

Apropos to the theatre, I have *read* the School for Scandal: it is rapid and lively, but is far from containing the wit I expected from seeing it acted.

May I leap from the Stage to the Bench? Sir Thomas Rumbold, one of our Indian mushrooms, asked his father-in-law, the Bishop of Carlisle, to answer for a child that he had, left in a parsley bed of diamonds at Bengal. The good man consented; a man child was born. The other godfather was the Nabob of Arcot, — and the new christian's name is —— Mahomet! What pity that Dr. Law was the godfather and not Bishop of Hagedorn or your Metropolitan!

Mr. Jones, the orientalist, is candidate for Oxford. On Tuesday was se'nnight Mrs. Vesey presented him to

me. The next day he sent me an absurd and pedantic letter, desiring I would make interest for him. I answered it directly, and told him I had no more connection with Oxford than with the Antipodes, nor desired to have. I doubt I went a little farther, and laughed at Dr. Blackstone, whom he quoted as an advocate for the rights of learning, and at some other passages in his letter. However, before I sent it, I inquired a little more about Mr. Jones, and on finding it was a circular letter sent to several, I did not think it necessary to answer it at all; and now I am glad I did not, for the man it seems is a staunch Whig, but very wrong-headed. He was tutor to Lord Althorpe, and quarrelled with Lord Spencer, who he insisted should not interfere at all in the education of his own son.

There are just appeared three new Epistles on History, addressed to Mr. Gibbon by Mr. Hayley. They are good poems, I believe, weight and measure, but except some handsome new similies, have little poetry and less spirit. In short, they are written by Judgment, who has set up for herself, forgetting that her business is to correct verses, and not to write them. Mr. Gibbon I doubt will not be quite pleased, for as the Epistles have certainly cost the author some pains, they were probably commenced before the historian's conversion to the Court, and are a little too fond of liberty to charm the ear of a convert, which too the author wants to make him in another sense, and that will not please, unless he has swallowed his Majesty's professions as well as his pay.

In another new publication, called Antiquities and Scenery in the North of Scotland, I have found two remarkable passages, which intimate doubts of the antiquity of Ossian, though the author is a minister in Bamff. The first, in p. 77, says, "*if only like a morning dream the visions of Ossian came in later days.*" The other humbly begs to know, p. 81, how Fingal became possessed of burnished armour, when the times knew not the use of steel and iron.

My *quondam* friend, George Montagu, has left your friend Frederic five hundred pounds a year. I am very glad of it.

I have heard what I should not repeat, as I do not know that it is true, but to-day I see it in the papers. In short they say that the unfortunate Knight of the Polar Star has disappeared. The reason given is that a demand of £300,000 more for finishing the sumptuous edifice where Somerset House stood, having been made to the House of Commons, Mr. Brett, a member, begged to see an account of what had been already expended, and the next day all the telescopes in town could not descry the Swedish planet. I am sorry, considering that the constellation of the Adelphi was not *rayée* from the celestial globe after their bubble lottery. I suppose Ossian will keep his ground, and would, if Macpherson should please to maintain that he lived before Tubal.

Berkeley Square, May 19, 1780.

Most part of this letter has been written many days, I waited for a proper conveyance. Now it comes to you in what Wedgwood calls a *Druid's Mug:* you must drink out of it *Ruin seize thee ruthless King.* Mr. Stonhewer gave me the direction but I find it will not set out before Tuesday; however, I shall not be able to add to this volume, as I go to Strawberry to-morrow and must leave it for the waggon. Sir Charles Hardy is dead suddenly. Lord Bathurst I suppose, will have the command of the Fleet, as the senior *old Woman on the Staff.*

I shall settle at Strawberry on Tuesday sevennight, so if you have a mind to hear from me you must write, for I shall know no more there than you in Yorkshire, and I cannot talk if nobody answers me; somebody knocks which is a very good conclusion when one has no more to say, oh it is Mr. Palgrave: well he tells me that Sir William Chambers is not gone away, so I retract all, but that the Adams ought to be gone. Adieu.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston near Worsop, May 20, 1780.

Were I to apologize for my long silence by saying that I waited till I could congratulate you on the going out of that Ministry which you said could not possibly

hold its ground after its very first defeat and twitted me not a little, because I held the matter possible, I should think I made a justifiable excuse. Yet as you say you have not been deceived by the return of the Tories to their vomit ('tis a Scripture phrase). I fear you would not admit such apology. Take then the true one, I am sick of writing about politics. The Whigs love wallowing in their mire ('tis another Scripture phrase) full as well as the Tories, there then I leave them, and sit myself down in patient expectation of the Millenium of Despotism, for nothing now can save us but what the people will never have the spirit to resolve upon, I don't mean a civil war, but a civil and pacific resolution not to pay any taxes; for instance, an excise-man comes to demand my post chaise tax; I suffer him to bear home on his shoulders my piano-forte and so on, preserving all the while a Quaker-like nonchalance. How do you like my system? I know you dislike it, because you would sooner be taxed ten shillings in the pound than part with Cardinal Wolsey's Hat or Harry the VIII.th's Clock Weight, but I God be thank'd have no such valuable personalities.

There is a woman who has addressed a sort of Whiggish Ode to my reverence and has applauded me for having praised Lord John Cavendish, just at the moment when I had settled it in my own mind that the said Lord had not one particle of true Whiggism in his composition. Has she not timed matters well: yet provided she is found to be poor, I have employed a Lady to give her five guineas. If I am not a good

Whig I hope you will allow that I am a good Christian.

I have seen Mr. Hollis's Memoirs, they have done me some good and have made me relish my old Mother Church better than I have done of some time. I remember some years ago Dr. Kaye preached a sermon in York Minster, in which he praised the excellency of our Ecclesiastical Constitution, its purity, simplicity, &c. so highly, that I whispered the Residentiary that sat next me, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Presbyterian." These Memoirs have brought me back again to almost my pristine Orthodoxy. I cannot however read our Prayer about America with due unction. I suppose you have heard Mr. Tyson is dead, just after he was settled in a good living near London. I fear he expended so much in making his parsonage comfortable, (for I saw it last Summer and it was very much so) that he has died very poor. I am told his books, &c. are to be sold soon for the benefit of his widow and child. I fancy he has left some antiquarian drawings, &c. that might be worth your purchasing. The name of living was Lamburne I think on the edge of Epping Forest. I hope (little as I deserve it) to hear from you very soon, believe me.

Yours very sincerely

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

May 24, 1780.

You will have found that I did not wait for your replying, for though I wish to hear from you much oftener than I do, yet I am neither punctilious nor insist on your writing so frequently as I, who am near the seat of news, though it is sure that I should be pleased with whatever you would send me, and should delight in your conversation on any subjects. Well! I say you have found — have not you? I sent you a present by the waggon, and a long letter, so this will be very short, for I exhausted myself.

If I was positive, and have been mistaken, I am most ready to acknowledge it. It would ill become me to be obstinate, when I blame others for being too positive. I think I could show what occasioned my being disappointed, but that would look too like not giving up my bad judgment when I pretend to give it up, and I had much rather abandon my own mistakes, than not accede to your opinion whenever I can. In one point I assuredly cannot conform. I mean to your wish that the people would refuse to pay taxes; Alas? what would be the consequence? some would be committed to prison: the witless mob would break open the prisons, and some of them would be shot, and some of them, for their incendiary leaders would desert them, would be hanged. Oh! my dear Sir, I can never approve of scenes so likely to produce such con-

sequences! I am not so convinced of the infallibility of my principles, of any modes of Religion or government as to risk the blood of a single being. Could I establish my system whatever it were, should I be able to restore the lives lost in the pursuit of my doctrines?

Has heaven authorized me to make this man happy at the expense of another man's life? No, no, nor will I ever let you who are all virtue and humanity, be less tender than I am, who am not a quarter so good.

As to this country, it is sunk perhaps never to rise again; but that is a theme would carry me into a volume. All may be reduced to two heads; the nation is *insensible*, and though we have parts we have no wisdom. Orators we have I believe superior to the most boasted of antiquity, but we have no politicians. Can either the court or the opposition boast of a single man who is fit to govern a whole country, much less to restore one! the nation itself is of my opinion: to whom does it look, up or down? From that essential defect every thing the ministers attempt, miscarries; and the opposition is split into little factions. It is my opinion that Europe itself is worn out. Has one great general or admiral risen out of this extensive war.

The story of Sir W. Chambers is odd; he is certainly in Flanders, but there is no embezzlement; he has money in his bankers' hands, writes to his family, and sends orders to his workmen at Somerset house. In short it is a mystery, which time, which establishes truth, but much oftener falsehood, must settle. Adieu.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, May 28, 1780.

There has been such an uncommon event that I must give you an account of it, as it relates to the Republic of poetry, of which you are President, and to the Aristocracy of noble authors, to whom I am gentleman usher. Lady Craven's Comedy called the Miniature Picture, which she acted herself with a genteel set at her own house in the country, has been played at Drury Lane. The chief singularity was that she went to it herself the second night, in form; sat in the middle of the front row of the stage box, much dressed, with a profusion of white bugles and plumes to receive the public homage due to her sex and loveliness. The Duchess of Richmond, Lady Harcourt, Lady Edgecumbe, Lady Ailesbury, Mrs. Damer, Lord Craven, General Conway, Colonel O'Hara, Mr. Lenox and I were with her. It was amazing to see so young a woman entirely possess herself — but there is such an integrity and frankness in her consciousness of her own beauty and talents, that she speaks of them with a *naïveté* as if she had no property in them, but only wore them as gifts of the Gods. Lord Craven on the contrary was quite agitated by his fondness for her and with impatience at the bad performance of the actors, which was wretched indeed, yet the address of the plot, which is the chief merit of the piece, and some lively pencilling carried it off very well, though Parsons

murdered the Scotch Lord, and Mrs. Robinson (who is supposed to be the favourite of the Prince of Wales) thought on nothing but her own charms, or him. There is a very good though endless Prologue written by Sheridan and spoken in perfection by King, which was encored (an entire novelty) the first night: and an Epilogue that I liked still better and which was full as well delivered by Mrs. Abington, written by Mr. Jekyl, the audience, though very civil, missed a fair opportunity of being galant, for in one of those — logues, I forget which, the noble authoress was mentioned, and they did not applaud as they ought to have done exceedingly when she condescended to avow her pretty child and was there looking so very pretty. I could not help thinking to myself how many deaths Lady Harcourt would have suffered rather than encounter such an exhibition: — Yet Lady Craven's tranquillity had nothing displeasing, it was only the ease that conscious pre-eminence bestows on Sovereigns whether their Empire consists in power or beauty. It was the ascendant of Millamont and Lady Betty Modish and Indamore; and it was tempered by her infinite good nature, which made her make excuses for the actors instead of being provoked at them. I have brought hither her portrait and placed it in the favourite blue room, and so I have the delightful picture of Charles II. and Rose his gardener, but have been forced to remove two others less in my graces, for I have not an inch of room now unoccupied. Sir Joshua has begun a charming picture of my three fair nieces,

the Waldegraves, and very like. They are embroidering and winding silk, I rather wished to have them drawn like the Graces adorning a bust of the Duchess as the Magna Mater — but my ideas are not adopted; however I still intend to have the Duchess and her two other children as Latona, for myself.

There has been a bloody scramble in the West Indies, which the extraordinary Gazette has created a victory. Some of Rodney's Captains have behaved ill; it is lucky that when our officers do not choose to fight, the French should choose to run away. Admiral Barrington when he refused the command on Hardy's death asked where our Fleet was, and our seamen and our discipline!

Lord Sandwich is resuscitating Sir Hugh Palisser; he toasted him at the dinner of the Trinity House, &c. Mr. Courtney refused to drink it. Palisser has since been at court.

I shall tell you a *bon mot* of Soame Jenyns, who by the way has been half killed at the nomination of Members for Cambridgeshire, and then reserve the rest of my paper till I go to town. Seeing some Members pairing off in the Speaker's Chamber, he said, "I think there are no happy pairs now in England, but those who pair here."

Sir W. Chambers has re-appeared, and been at the Royal Academy. His absence is now said to have been an *equipée* of galantry, one would think you or I cared extremely about Sir William when he makes so

many paragraphs in my letters; but I hate to write lies and had rather be tiresome than false.

31st.

I have been in town for the birth-day of the little Princess of our little court, but heard no news, so am in no hurry to send away my letter. The Chancellor has been dying, and thinks himself that he shall not be able to keep the Seals, though the physicians do not despair of him. I was told that the conclusion of Rodney's letter had these words. "It was the most melancholy day for England I ever saw." That was a bold assertion. There is a notion that Admiral Parker and his division Palissered Rodney, but *Iliacos intra Muros et extra.*

There is just published a Dialogue of Rousseau, the title of which is Rousseau Juge Jean Jacques. There are fine strokes of eloquence you may be certain and much address in the management of the argument, which is to confute the charges of his enemies; but the ground work is his old frenzy, composed of vanity and suspicions. He asserts that there is a universal plot against him composed of the philosophes, clergy, his own friends and every body else, headed by the French Government, and supported at great expense; and that the whole world is sworn to keep a profound secret from him all that is said against him, though by somebody's perjury he knows it all, and moreover the plot is proved by one of the Interlocutors of the

Dialogue allowing it to be true. Lord Harcourt himself allows it is a very odd book and certainly Rousseau's, and yet I think is sorry it is.

If the clergy, and philosophes and French administration can all unite in any one point, there is a little more art in France than in England.

June 2nd.

I have this minute received your letter but cannot satisfy your curiosity I know, nor shall know more of Rodney's story or Mr. Strutt's till then. I, and consequently you, can see in the papers I have done with London for this season and have no correspondent there, and shall seldom visit it. My days are drawing to a conclusion, and I wish to pass them with as little pain as I can and with as little vexation, consequently, politics can but disturb them. You tell me that of two extreme evils one must *. I own that is not my opinion I think we shall dwindle into an insignificant single island and in which stupidity may at last settle into despotism; but I think there is not only not spirit, but not sense enough any where to bring the contest to an immediate decision, and since we have neither wisdom nor virtue left I hope not, for I am convinced that only the few good men amongst us would be the victims. I shall go to Malvern in July for a month or six weeks, and visit Nuncham in autumn if I am well enough. Adieu.

* A word is here torn out from the MS., with a broken seal.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, May 31, 1780.

A thousand thanks for the charming Druid mug which I received yesterday, and the long and excellent letter which accompanied it. I have to thank you also for another letter by the post, in which, though you think my political scheme tends to inhumanity, I heartily forgive you, yet depend upon it, matters are now growing so near a crisis, that (whatever may be either your or my opinions) despotism or a struggle against it, and a warm one too will be to be expected; tame submission will indeed spare present bloodshed, but you can make the inference without my assistance.

I have neither seen Royal Reflections nor Garrick's Life, nor the Ode, which without telling me its name you ascribe to S. Jenyns; were it certainly his, perhaps it would be worth a few strictures. I shall look for it in the booksellers' shops at York, whither I am immediately going in my way into the North Riding, where I shall make a few visits and return hither the beginning of July, but pray continue your directions hither as my curate will know how to forward all letters to me by the very same post that brings them. I shall be curious to know how Lord John Cavendish votes on Strutt's bill for increasing parliamentary qualifications. He ought on his own principles to vote for it, and yet the papers tell me it is brought in to disqualify Charles Fox, Burke, &c. from sitting in the next parliament. I

hope soon to have an interesting letter from you on Rodney's disobedient captains, I trust they are all Lord Sandwich's dearest friends.

Accounts from Charlestown too I think must come either (good or bad, bad or good ;) shuffle the words and then cut them, and chuse which you please for trumps. Adieu.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Sunday night, June 4, 1780.

I went to town on Friday for a private supper, to which I was engaged. There I found your letter, finished mine and put it into the post, and went out ; and it was past eight at night before I heard a syllable of the prodigious tumult at Westminster. All yesterday I had not a minute's time to write you a line, so you will have seen all the particulars in the common papers. Miraculously no lives were lost, nor was part of the town burnt, as it was near being, for the mob not only set on fire the Sardinian Minister's Chapel, but, till the guards arrived, would not suffer the engines to play on it. Nothing ever surpassed the abominable behaviour of the ruffian apostle that preached up this storm. I always, you know well, disliked and condemned the repeal of the popish statutes, and am steadfast in that opinion, but I abhor such protestantism as breathes the soul of popery, and commences a reformation by attempting a massacre. The frantic incendiary ran

backwards and forwards naming names for slaughter to the mob: fortunately his disciples were not expert at assassination, and nobody was murdered for the gospel's sake. So blind was his zeal, and so ill tutored his outlaws, that though the petition was addressed and carried to the House of Commons, the chief fury fell on the peers, and on some of the most inoffensive, as Lord Willoughby and Lord Boston, the latter of whom was thrown down and trampled on, and had a most narrow escape. The demolition of two chapels of foreign ministers, which they enjoy by the law of nations, and did enjoy before the repeal, is another savage outrage, and I suppose will throw the King of Sardinia into the general league against us. One may hope I trust that the universal detestation which the Gordon has drawn on himself, will disarm his farther power of mischief, though a statute of lunacy ought to be his doom. Colonel Murray, uncle of the Duke of Athol, said to him in the House of Commons, "I see many lives will be lost, but, by God, yours shall be one of them." Some of the coolest of the members have told me that there was one moment in which they thought they should be forced to open the doors of the House and fight their way out, sword in hand, as their only chance of safety.

The wretch had marked the Duke of Richmond to the populace for sacrifice, and they called for him, but the greater part, not knowing on what view, echoed the sound, and called for *the noble Duke of Richmond.* Lord Mahon counteracted the incendiary, and chiefly

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contributed by his harangues to conjure down the tempest.

What steps are to be taken I do not know, what preventive measures were taken are to be summed up thus: the cabinet council, on Thursday, authorized Lord North to prepare the civil officers to keep the peace, and *he forgot it* till two o'clock at noon, some hours after the procession had begun to march.

Well, here is a religious war added to all our civil and foreign wars, enough surely to gorge Bellona herself, and to throw open the most promising field to France. If these evils could be enhanced, they would be by the confusion of jarring interests and opinions that cross one another in every possible direction. The Duke of Richmond, who you and I lament is for toleration of popery, will please *you* by having yesterday offered a bill for annual parliaments, and is gone out of town to day, disgusted at its being rejected. Yet, though I differ with him on both points, I worship his thousand virtues beyond any man's: he is intrepid and tender, inflexible and humane beyond example. I do not know which is most amiable, his heart or his conscience. He ought too to be the great model to all our factions. No difference in sentiments between him and his friends makes the slightest impression on his attachment to them; but like many models, he will not be imitated. I recommend his example a little to you yourself, my good Sir, because the only little good I can hope to do while I remain here, is to conciliate my friends, whose great outlines are the same, though the

folds of their garments may flow in different styles. You seem too much estranged from Lord John; I have often disagreed with him, but always honoured his integrity: surely that is the fountain of principles; whatever has grown on his margin, the source has remained limpid and undefiled. You despise my weariness and palsied chill of age, but I take nothing ill of a friend. I stand on the threshold of both worlds, and look back and forwards for this poor country with fond eyes, and think that nothing can redeem it, even in part, but sober and well poised virtue. Violence, unsupported by general national union, will, like Lord Gordon's phrenzy, but precipitate destruction, and in its progress be embued with every act of injustice. That lunatic, whom I should less severely condemn if I saw nothing in him but lunacy, is horridly black in my eyes, for you know it is my most conscientious opinion that no man has a right to expose any life but his own on any disputable tenet in religion or government, still less on suspicions or jealousies; but I wander, from indignation against him, and will finish lest I dissert, instead of amusing you with news. In vain I try to steep my senses in oblivion, and to lull the remaining hours. Such shocks as Friday's agitate all my sensibility. Jesus! if the Duke of Richmond had fallen a victim to a blind tumult, in which half the sacrificers devoted him to the Furies, while half adored him.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, June 9, at night, 1780.

I have not had a moment's time or one calm enough to write you a single line and now am not only fatigued, but know not where to begin, or how to arrange the thousand things I have in my mind. If I am inccherent you must excuse it, and accept whatever presents itself.

I could not bear to sit here in shameful selfish philosophy, and hear the million of reports, and know almost all I loved in danger, without sharing it. I went to town on Wednesday, and though the night was the most horrible I ever beheld, I would not take millions not to have been present; and should I have seen the conflagration as I must from these windows, I should have been distracted for my friends. At nine at night on notice of fire, I went with the Duchess and her daughters to the top of Gloucester House and thence beheld the King's Bench, which was a little town, and at a distance the New Prison in flames. At past ten I went to General Conway's, in a moment we were alarmed by the servants, and rushing to the street-door saw through little Warwick-street such an universal blaze, that I had no doubt the Mews, at least St. Martin's-lane was on fire. Mr. Conway ran and I limped after him to Charing Cross, but though seemingly close, it was no nearer than the Fleet Market; at past twelve I went up to Lord Hertford's,

two of his sons came in from the Bridge at Blackfriars, where they had seen the Toll Houses plundered and burnt. Instantly arrived their cook, a German Protestant with a child in his arms, and all we could gather was that the mob was in possession of his house, had burnt his furniture and had obliged him to abandon his wife and another child. I sent my own footman for it was only in Woodstock-street, and he soon returned and said it had been only some apprentices who supposed him a Papist on his not illuminating his house, and that three of them and an Irish Catholic chairman had been secured, but the poor man has lost his all! I drove from one place to another till two, but did not go to bed till between three and four, and ere asleep heard a troop of horse gallop by. My Printer whom I had sent out for intelligence came not home till past nine the next morning, I feared he was killed, but then I heard of such a scene. He had beheld three sides of the Fleet Market in flames, Barnard's Inn at one end, the prison on one side and the distiller's on the other, besides Fetter and Shoe lanes, with such horrors of distraction distress &c., as are not to be described; besides accounts of slaughter near the Bank. The engines were cut to pieces and a dozen or fourteen different parts were burning. It is incredible that so few houses and buildings in comparison are in ashes. The papers must tell you other details and of what preceded the total demolition of Lord Mansfield's, &c.

Yesterday was some slaughter in Fleet-street by the

Horse Guards and more in St. George's Fields by the Protestant Association, who fell on the rioters, who appear to have been chiefly apprentices, convicts and all kinds of desperadoes, for Popery is already out of the question, and plunder all the object. They have exacted sums from many houses to avoid being burnt as popish. The ringleader Lord George is fled. The Bank, the destruction of all prisons and of the Inns of Court, were the principal aims.

The Magistrates, intimidated by demolition of Fielding's and Justice Hyde's houses did not dare to act. A general Council was summoned at Buckingham House at which the twelve Judges attended. It was determined not to shut up the Courts but to order military execution. Both Houses are adjourned to Monday sevennight which hurt General Conway so much, who intended yesterday to move for the repeal of the Toleration and found the House adjourned before he could get to it, though early, that he is gone out of town.

The night passed quietly, and by this evening there will be eighteen thousand men in and round the town. As yet there are more persons killed by drinking than by ball or bayonet. At the great popish distiller's they swallowed spirits of all kinds, and Kirgate saw men and women lying dead in the streets under barrows as he came home yesterday.

We have now, superabundantly, to fear robbery, 300 desperate villains were released from Newgate. Lady Albemarle was robbed at Mrs. Keppel's door in

Pall Mall at twelve at night. Baron D'Aguilar's coach was shot at here last night close to the Crown.

I have so much exerted my no strength, and had so little sleep these two nights, that I came hither to day for some rest. It will be but *grim repose*. It is said that this insurrection was expected in France a month ago. Just as I came away Mr. Griffith told me the French were embarking. In short what may not be expected? then one turns from what is to come to helpless misery, that will soon be forgotten but by the sufferers. Whole families ruined, wives that tried to drag their husbands out of the mobs and have found them breathless, the terrors of the Catholics, indeed of all foreigners, but one. That Scythian Heroine the Princess Daskion is here, her natural brother Rantzau was taken in Mons. Cordon's Chapel, and was reclaimed by Simonin, and released; *she* herself on Wednesday, I *know* sent Lord Ashburnham word that his house was marked for destruction, merciful tigress! it is proof he is not an Emperor.

My bosom I think, does not want humanity, yet I cannot feel pity for Lord Mansfield. I did feel joy for the four convicts who were released from Newgate within twenty-four hours of their execution, but ought not a man to be taught sensibility, who drove us cross the Rubicon? I would not hurt a hair of his head: but if I sigh for the afflicted innocent, can I blend him with them?

You will call me fool in your own mind, and tell yourself that a week ago I announced that national lethargy

would doze into despotism. I have long known how short-sighted my penetration is, I allow all you can think of my littleness of mind. However, I would not change a mean understanding or a want of spirit for any thing I hold to be wrong, nor think, I beg you, that by that assertion I pretend to any goodness. I am often guilty, but it is not with tranquillity, nor from my soul being steeled against remorse, still less do I condemn others who act what they think right, or doubt the soundness of the principles of my friends, on the contrary I honour those who have more firmness than myself, yet in the most quiet times my opinion was exactly what it is now: many years ago I shocked Mrs. Macauley by telling her, that had I been Luther and could have foreseen the woes I should occasion, I should have asked myself whether I was authorized to cause the deaths of three or four hundred thousand persons that future millions might be advantaged. The Spartan Matron despised my scruples.

Well! confusion is trumps! one only thing I anxiously beg, do not think ill of your friends; I don't mean myself, I am of no consequence, but be assured that you will love ever Lord Rockingham when I can tell you something that I cannot write. If I live to see you again, but ifs are the subterfuges of those that cannot support present unhappiness; whoever can descry connection between *this* instant and any thing that is to come is the maximus of all Apollos. Adieu.

Saturday morning.

I have this moment received two letters from town to tell me that Lord George Gordon was overtaken in his flight to Scotland, and was just brought prisoner to the Horse Guards. This is all I know yet, except that some say he was seized in the park, and was not fled,

Wait for the echo.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

June 29, 1780.

Since the great combustion I have not known what to write, nor did Mr. Stonhewer know where you are. I shall prepare this against he sends me word whither to direct it, as he has promised. My opinion of the causes of the late tumults is a very vague one, nor shall I decide till I learn more. Whatever Lord G. Gordon meant, Anti-Catholicism seems not only to have had little, but even only a momentary hand in the riots. Some Americans perhaps taught by the lessons we had given them of burning towns, joined in the opportunity; a thousand discontents added others and all the indigent villains in London seized the opportunity and improved it, not to mention how many concurred from wanton folly without design. The court at first had a mind to bestow a plot on France, Spain and the Americans, but now seem to abandon that plan. France, solicited by American agents, might as she used to do when

teased by the Jacobites, contribute a little money, a few arms and some rogues, of whom she was willing to disburthen herself, but I do not imagine it was a branch of her political schemes to burn London. She would have had some force ready to pour in and distract us in some other quarter, while the army should be all drawn to the capital.

I am much more inclined to suppose that a court plot was engrafted early on the prospect of tumults, nay negative *plots*. I do not believe they intended to have Lord Stormont mobbed, Lord Sandwich almost murdered, nor Lord Mansfield's house destroyed, but Sir Geo. Saville, the D. of Richmond, and Burke, were more devoted by the zealot part of the mob than any of the cabinet; so few or such no precautions were taken after such provoking notice had been given by Lord George Gordon, that it is not very injurious to conclude that a necessity for calling the army together to suppress an insurrection was no very disagreeable opportunity.

It has certainly answered so roundly that I do believe the machinist would forgive the imputation, in consideration of the honour it would do to his policy; even Lord Mansfield has risen like a phœnix from the flames, and vomits martial law, as if all law books were burnt as well as his own; nay, like *his* plate almost all party is melted into a mass of bullion loyalty.

This was a moment I have long dreaded! I had no doubt but the court wish'd insurrections. It was strong enough *at home* to suppress them, and the suppression

would unite *all* the military and militia, and all under one standard, and so I am persuaded it has already.

To compleat our destruction there is an universal *Anarchy of opinion;* no three men agree on any three propositions. Lord Shelburne and Lord Rockingham are bitter enemies. Burke, who has declared himself educated by an anabaptist, is mad for toleration. The Duke of Richmond and Charles Fox agree with him on that point, while the Duke is as violent for annual parliaments as the Rockinghams against them. Lord Shelburne, Lord Camden, and the Duke of Grafton are as strongly anti-papistic. The court indeed is as full of dissension; but if interest divides men it re-unites them too, which is not the case of opinions; and such a multitude of them has been indiscreetly broached by opposition itself, that while the court keeps steady to two points only, prerogative and the subjugation of America, it may perhaps succeed, at least in the first, before opposition will agree on a single one. The court would carry the other also I think if it had the sense to temporise and consent to a tolerable pacification, but having had originally no fund of genuine wisdom, and having squandered foolishly and anticipated all its resources, it will as usual mistake prosperity for means and blunder away its opportunities under the notion of firmness. France and ten thousand other concurrent impediments will lie still in the way, so that the whole of my reasoning centres in this, that we are in every light undone; that anarchy will reign for some time, and despotism succeed when we are as much ruined by

labouring towards it, as we should have been in a few years if it had taken place when first projected.

This is the sketch of my present thoughts — whether consistent with other letters that I have written to you lately, I cannot remember, I generally judge from the complexion of circumstances, nor do I know a better guide in times when a Nation is at its dregs, and the men that do think and act from principle are not only few, but distracted by subdivisions of sentiments, and have no one general system in common; my idea was to adhere to the precise line of the constitution, as a standard of union, and to endeavour to restore it but that moment is gone, or never was arrived; I see nothing now before me on which to count except the folly that governs, and which may throw away the advantages it has recovered. That is our sole chance — and I have no head for calculating chances — still less for computing what good may arise out of folly, mischief and wickedness.

There has been more than one negociation for partial changes, and on very different foundations, Lord Rockingham at the very moment that the public thought him more than leaning towards the ministers, took the opportunity of reading a very explicit lecture against them in the closet. At this instant (June 23rd.) I think it much more likely that the Parliament will be soon dissolved, trusting to the terror spread by the late tumults that none but good Catholics will be returned. The army no doubt will be retained at the head quarters, unless France should call it off, which does

not seem probable. Lord Mansfield will have courage to coin what law he pleases while the House of Lords is guarded by Dragoons; and the Chancellor, whom all sides blindly concur in crying up to the skies, has spirit enough of his own to execute any enterprize to which he shall be commanded; and is as ready as Maupeon to annihilate parliaments, if timidity and cunning did not prefer *voting* despotism to laying aside votes.

I could expatiate on many particulars of this letter if we were together. More I shall not know beyond the information of the newspapers, for I shall scarce look at London this summer, one sees there nothing but the royal wish realized, red and blue coats, whoever makes his court makes a campaign. I was not born to be a courtier or a soldier. There is no hope left for an Englishman! one can expect but to be laid prostrate by France or to be enslaved at home; perhaps both, though France does not seem to see all her advantages. We have contributed nine parts in ten to our own ruin; like us she set out with vapouring and has performed as little. How despicable must both England and France appear to those active monopolizers of usurpation, the sovereigns of Prussia, Russia, and Germany. Spain, is still more contemptible who enters into a quarrel against its will, and is content with beating its head against the rocks of Gibraltar, but France at least has a harvest to come; she cannot have forgotten the treaties of Utrecht and Paris, and never wants a Lord

Bolingbroke or a Lord Bute to negotiate for our shame, when she is tired of war. Lord Mansfield no doubt hopes to live to that dear hour and see Lord Stormont return to Paris to sign our last cession of Empire.

June 29, 1780.

I send this letter to town by a servant, and shall beg Mr. Stonhewer to convey it to you by the coach or waggon. I have not heard a syllable of news this week, events must seek me, for I shall not enquire after them, and what signifies writing conjectures or reflections.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

DEAR SIR, Aston, July 12, 1780.

I have been a tour into the north (for you know I am in the west) any time these six weeks, and though your letters were duly forwarded to me, I postponed answering them, as I could only send you back reflections on the shocking scenes you were witness to, which you must have made better on the spot. Amongst all my acquaintance I know not above two, besides yourself, who agreed with me from the first of the impropriety of introducing that bill which was the cause of the tumult, and I trust that nothing which has been said either by my Lord Chancellor or the Right Reverend Bench has led us to change our opinion, I shall as soon

believe with Sir Thomas Mills, that Mr. Maskall, whom I never saw, was a rioter, and that I could swear to him as such, as that in these times such a bill was expedient.

However it has given government a fair handle to proceed by, and the speech I have just read shews me they will proceed by it. I cannot take the compliment you make us Associators of the Duke of R.'s being our coadjutor, so cordially as you may expect I should. It is certain when the Committee deputies met, that persons sent by him occasioned an alteration in the form of our Association which many of us think is for the worse, and yet after that, he in less than two months time, brings a bill into the House which goes further than the warmest of us would ever have attempted to have gone; but, in short, I see so much inconclusiveness on all sides, that I find myself obliged to abide by my own opinions, merely because they have been my old opinions, and I act no other part under the ministration of Lord North than I should have done, had an opportunity offered, under that of the Duke of Newcastle, and should do again were there to be an administration under my Lord Rockingham. How far am I to congratulate on the Royal fraternal reconciliations? I fancy not much if a court bird (a little lame or so) which I have lately heard, sings a true song. Tell me however, and I'll prepare my *congratulatio Astonica:*

I sincerely hope you will continue your most agreeable Historico-politico-litterario Gazettes; they make my principal entertainment at this distance from town, and

if I do not thank you for them so frequently as I ought, blame me not on that score, a man that has nothing but half pension to pay with, must tire a person that waits till he changes a guinea. Believe me at all times even times worse than the present

your most obliged
and faithful humble servant
W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, July 15, 1780.

As my gazettes owed their whole fund of merit to my being in London and to your being in the North West with the sole, though uncommon appendix of my telling you nothing but what I believe true or telling you any thing more but as report; I don't know whether I do not comply too literally with your request if I write when I can send you neither a political nor a literary gazette. I scarce ever look at London — *quid Romæ faciam?* I am in utter ignorance, nay, I am sure there is nothing new, for Cambridge was here this morning and had nothing in his budget of more importance than the Duke of Montagu's being set out for Scotland, which you may repay by informing me when Lady Conyers's wet nurse arrives. The notion is that Lord George Gordon is not to be tried; Mr. C. said, "if not he guessed why;" I had not the curiosity

to ask him what he guessed. I have buried my curiosity; what can happen that is worth learning!

You ask me if you shall send me a *congratulatio Astonica* — no: not unless it can be preceded identically in every particular like its predecessors by a *luctus.* Your lame bird chirped truly: of which hereafter.

My court is busily occupied by a great wedding; the Duchess's second infanta, Donna Maria, is going to be married to the Conde di Egremont. It's he is grandson of Sir William Windham, and descended from proud dull old Somerset. I flatter myself their children will be dashed with loyalty, pride, and stupidity enough (in spite of Lady Maria's wit, and drops of Sir Robert's blood) to fit them for being grandees of the first class in the rising monarchy. Don't you believe that the Bavarian nobles were very vain of their *Elector* becoming the *Emperor* Charles VII, though it cost him his dominions. These hymeneals will prevent my going to Malvern, to which I had no great fancy, especially as I am in much better health than I was last summer.

I have no more paragraphs for you but a history that is both literary and political — no, not that, but exactly of the gender of our late politics; in short riotic; you must know an embankment is making at Richmond for drawing barges, for the benefit of the City's trade. It encroaches on the garden of Colman, manager of the little theatre in the Haymarket. He cut away the piles; the city went to law with him and the town of Richmond, and cast them, and renewed the invasion. On Monday evening Colman hired an *Association,* who

stormed and levelled the new works, and knocked down two persons who opposed them, and half-killed one. A committee of the city arrived on Thursday in their barge, and (I suppose by authority of Lord Amherst countersigned by Lord Bathurst) seized twenty of the rioters and now hold them imprisoned on board their floating King's bench, under a guard of the military, who are applied to all sauces. In a new farce of Colman, called the Manager in distress, I found t'other day the portrait of Cambridge in the character of a newsmonger, *who lives about twelve miles from town*. I wondered this was so specifically marked, but he dropped this morning that he had staved off the nuisance of the embankment on his side of the river (for he lives directly opposite to Colman) by a clause in the act of parliament, and that offence I suppose dragged him on the stage, which is a little hard, as he had the same right to feel what Colman so much resents, and he is truly, I mean Cambridge, so benevolent and inoffensive a man, that his little foible does not deserve such treatment.

When shall you go to Nuneham? I should like to meet you there, I expect Sandby every day who is to attempt Lady Di's drawings for my play in his new Aquatinta. It is a thousand pities they should exist only in one septinity and that the world should have no idea of the powers of her genius if the originals should perish. Bartolozzi has executed very well the drawing of her two daughters, but they have not half the ingredients, passions, graces horrors, scenes, expressions of

my seven pictures. I am writing in their own closet, and it is having the continence of Scipio to say no more about them though you know them so well; but how infinitely pleasanter if you was sitting here and talking them over! what shackled conversations are letters when one gasps for effusion! you can rhyme your sensations and stamp them immortal, and gulp them and they half choak me; pray breathe for me, and send me something to help me — as the apothecaries say, — expectorate.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 8, 1780.

You have perhaps heard or at least seen in the papers enough of the story of my niece Lady Maria and Lord Egremont: not to be surprised at my late silence. The treaty occupied me for some time, and the rupture since. Do not be alarmed; I am not going to suffocate you with the detail, I will only say that she has behaved with a good sense, spirit and gentleness, that, except the first surprised me, and she blended the two last with such charming propriety, that nothing but perfection in the first could have united them so gracefully. Her lover is a pitiful object on whom her merit would have been deplorably thrown away.

You lost nothing by my silence. Though I write now, I have nothing to tell you. The Parliament was,

I believe to have been dissolved to-morrow, if it is not, I suppose it is from no renewal of love between dear friends; but proceeds either from the sailing of the Spanish Fleet or from fear of bad news from the West Indies, which might squeeze a little lemon into the elections. A leaf of laurel no bigger than one shred of a daisy would give wings to the proclamation that lies ready to fly.

I know no more literary than political news, in short I know nothing. To-morrow I go to Park-place, and did intend to extend my progress to Nuneham, but Lady Jersey, who is at Richmond with Lady Di Beauclerk and drank tea here yesterday evening, told me the Harcourts are to pay their annual visit to Lord Vernon on Thursday. Pray tell me when you are to be at Nuneham, I should like to meet you there. Lady Jersey says the plan of alteration of the house is laid aside; and all I could understand was, that the approach to the house is to be changed; but she is too fine a Lady to explain how that will produce their being better lodged.

You are desired to conclude that I could fill the rest of this page with a collection of phrases, that while they complained of want of matter would display great ingenuity in spinning a full letter out of inanity, or if you will not be so complaisant, I do not much care. The naked truth is that I have not a word more to say. If you think I might as well not have written, I think so too: but at least it proves that I thought on you: and it proves too that in the most glorious reign

in our annals, there was one moment in which one had nothing to commend.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 24, 1780.

The glorious Campaigns in the two Parks and the vengeance inflicted on a parcel of school-boys and house-maids, who have been executed for performing a rebellion, that was suckled for a week by the whole Legislature, and by the Magistracy of London, are a little obscured already by the entire capture of our East and West Indian Fleets by the Spanish squadron, under the nose of the sentimental Dr. Cumberland. I suppose he will be recalled now like the illustrious Stormont and Eden as he has executed his Mission; for we contrive to send Proxies to receive affronts. The first Commissioner of the Admiralty I suppose will go to Portsmouth to receive a box of the ear from Captains Huncuff or Crusanuff, who seem selected by Captain Thomas Mackensie, one of the Russian Commanders, to insult us by their very names. He perhaps will be invested *here* like Lord Macleod with *the Polish Star*. Apropos, two companies raised by the latter Laird for the East are taken, and two ships of Ordnance and seven of General Rainsford's companies for Jamaica.

The Parliament it is said and believed will not be dissolved. The reason assigned is that the voters in the Militia cannot be spared from the camps to chuse

a new Standing Army of Parliament-men. I hurry over politics which makes one's ink blush till it is red ink; yet I have nothing else to tell you. I go on Monday to make Mr. Barrett a visit in Kent, and shall look again at Knowle.

As there is no likelihood of a general election, unless some miraculous victory should drop out of the clouds, I promise myself that you will think of Nuneham in September, where I will certainly meet you, if you give me notice. Sandby has not come near me, nor does even Strawberry furnish a paragraph, yet when I see you, I shall not be so barren as I seem to be, though I have sauntered away the whole summer, but my ears have not lain fallow. Adieu.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley-square, Aug. 31, 1780.

I hate to send false news, though about insignificant subjects as the choice of churchwardens or Members of Parliament, and therefore I write a line to tell you the latter is to be dissolved to-morrow.

I returned from Mr. Barrett's last night, which is a prettier place than he had modestly represented. It is like himself quiet. There is a small house that is decent, a cheerful vale, an humble stream improved, a few trees of dignity, and ground irregular enough for variety. He has some few good pictures, prints, and books, and indulges himself without extravagance.

I saw some other places that I liked less, and revisited Knowle on my return, which disappointed my memory much; but unless you know how vast and venerable I thought I remembered it, I cannot give you the measure of my surprise, but then there was a trapes of a housekeeper, who I suppose was the Baccelli's dresser, and who put me out of humour, and so good night.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, Sept. 20, 1780.

After a most bustling and uncomfortable fortnight at York, &c., I am returned hither for a week's quiet. I hope our Association will obtain some little grace and favour in your eyes, both for what it has done, and for what it has not done. It has plucked every peacock's feather out of the tail of that strutting carrion crow, Lascelles, and has not sullied the immaculate white plumage of the uncle, of the House of Cavendish.

Are you satisfied? I am sure Lord Rockingham ought to be so, for we have done for him what he would never have dared to do for himself, could he have enjoyed that plenitude of ministerial power which your father, and Mr. Pelham after him, ever enjoyed. An opposition in the county of York would never have been ventured upon, and yet we have proved its practicability, and have, by a most moderate subscription, (not above £14,000) frightened the Lord Paramount of

the West India Islands out of the contest, nothing was ever a more complete victory, and nothing ever more easily obtained.

But while I am boasting in this manner do not think that from this event I augur any substantial good to this miserable country. If elections in general go as ill in the other counties as they have done in Yorkshire the next parliament will be, if possible, worse than the last. *Parlons d'autres choses.*

I find here a letter from my friend Mr. Gilpin, (whose drawings you once saw in my hands and admired) some years ago he published a pretty little book which he called an Essay on Prints, and which has past through two editions and is now in the press for a third. He tells me, " he has an inclination to inscribe it to you, if I think it will be well taken and not considered in any little low pecuniary view," and adds, " that if I think so I must send him your proper address and that he wishes to do it merely from regard to your taste and genius." I shall venture to answer this in the affirmative, as I am sure his address will contain nothing fulsome, and because I am also sure you neither can nor ought to take such a compliment in ill part from so plain and honest a man as Mr. Gilpin is.

I long prodigiously for authentic Windsor Anecdotes, and from the hand of the Author of the Anecdotes on Painting, who can paint them in their proper colors, black and all black — but I believe they will require still blacker colouring than black, and, as Hamlet says a suit of sables. I return to York again on Monday

merely to join the train of my friend Mr. Duncombe, whom I have been intimate with from early youth. I shall return at the end of the week and shall then begin to prepare for an expedition to Nuneham, where I shall hope to meet you. The good Lord of that place made me a visit here in my absence, from Mr. Sedley's, near Nottingham, and waited for me ineffectually three days; a plague on politics say I that have robbed me of his company.

Yours most truly

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 24, 1780.

I congratulate you on your success and rejoice in it more from the aspect of the blossoms of virtue than from any expectation of fruits: and yet I am persuaded that if brought to maturity, it must be by Temper, and not by being forced in hot beds. Violence, especially in opposition, neither lasts, nor produces lasting benefits. The enormous deviations of late from the Constitution will never be corrected permanently by contrary extremes — and to induce the nation to labour its restitution, it must be convinced that the necessary medicines tend to bring back the habit of body that can be proved to have bestowed the most vigorous state of happiness. Novelties of which the effects are to be experimental and uncertain, will never unite a variety of minds in one system. I am not bigotted

to the specific mode of the old Constitution because old; nor think it absolutely perfect — but all experience teaches us that a mass of people will be so bigotted, and will sooner be allured by names than by reasonings. Their enemies too will be strengthened by preaching up the loveliness of the very Constitution they have violated, if deviations from it are recommended as remedies.

I could say still much more against violence, but that seems unnecessary. The episode of Lord George Gordon proved I was not mistaken. It was at the eve of frightening all the world into a *demand* of military government, I go farther: it is my opinion that the deepest schemers of absolute power long for insurrections: and if I do not refine too much, I think I can descry that wish in the total neglect of all prevention of the late riots, these are but the outlines of my thoughts *on one side.* We shall perhaps agree better in those *on the other* where I discern as many defects, as I observe voluntary errors in those they oppose. The result of both is despair, I foresee nothing but ruin, composed of various calamities. My time of life makes me fly to that ungenerous comfort of paltry old men, what does it signify to me who am going out of the world?

One chapter in all this folio of follies does astonish me — I mean the conduct of France and Spain. They congregate all Europe against us to have the childish satisfaction of smutting our face! say if you please, for the postponed malice of destroying us in detail —

but is that a stroke of policy, when they might crush us at a blow? I am tempted to suspect our ministers of being Machiavels. They seem indeed to have no object but of undoing their own Country, but are they not rather occupied in swaying the cabinets of Versailles and Madrid, and confounding their plans? Was not it Agathocles, who when besieged in Syracuse, invaded Carthage.

Like you, I willingly turn from politics of which I am heartily sick, to pleasanter themes.

My humility is so predominant that I am afraid of pushing it to affectation, upon my conscience, I had rather waive the distinction your friend Mr. Gilpin is willing to pay me. Any interested view he cannot have, for I have neither wealth nor credit, and were it not presumption, would add never *will* have either. But it is solemnly true that I have so mean an opinion of myself that I know not how to consent to any honour. Genius I absolutely have not — taste if you please — for of that I should be no more vain than of personal beauty — but I have so much littleness in my mind, such a want of virtue that any praise to my understanding makes me cast my eyes inwards with contrition and disgust. Would not an idol of mud blush if it could, at seeing itself crowned with laurel! — having made my confession to you, my confessor, do what you please, but save me from compliments, and from *Honorables* — there I am proud not humble. I am thoroughly convinced that that wretched ray of an Earldom procured me half my little fame. Things I have

published without my name, though not worse than their baptised brethren, have perished in their merited obscurity. I can smile at it but at least it makes me set no value on my literary reputation — It is not derogating from these professions that I am on the point of publishing my last volume of Painters. On the contrary, I have fixed on this moment as the most favourable to the little notice I desire should be taken of it.

I will certainly meet you at Nuneham. Tell me precisely when you will be there, you will not see me happy: I am not now, I dread every day receiving an account of the death of my dear old friend Madame du Deffand. The last letter from Paris left me small hopes. Adieu.

Yours most cordially

H. W.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

" Nuneham, Oct. 13, 1780.

I am heartily vexed at my disappointment. I have not only not found you here, but find you will not come till I am gone. I begged you to tell me your motions, but heard not a word of you. I delayed and delayed till it grew too late in the year for me to venture being from home lest the gout should arrive. It is more provoking that you have been flinging away your time on a turnpike meeting, a certain way to be sure to overthrow despotism! I should like to see a letter from Brutus to Cassius, telling him that he hoped to stab

Cæsar to the heart by setting aside a tool of the tyrant, whom he intended to make surveyor of the Appian way. If Horace had been in a plot, I should tell him, were I Cassius, that he would have been better employed in writing a satire on ——. I have forgotton all my Roman history, and so I will suppose some instance that would answer to Johnson's billinsgate on Milton, or Soame Jenyns's Ode on Horace and Virgil; in short and in plain English, you that have no business but with immortality, are squabbling in vestries, or in elections that signify no more than vestries; are wrapping up a matchless talent in the course rubber of a country tavern. Prythee leave England to its folly, to its ruin, to the Scotch. They have reduced it to a skeleton, and the bones will stick in their own throats; you will find nothing but Io Pæans on Lord Cornwallis. The court has lost some elections, but who are come in but banditti, whom they will buy the first week they come to town.

I have left with Lord Harcourt for you my new old last volume of Painters. You need not turn it over, for there is not a syllable you have not seen but the short preface, and shorter dedication. By the latter you see I do not court popularity.

If you have a mind to be very obliging after disappointing me so much, you will make four posts more and come to Strawberry; If you do not I hope Bishop Hurd will be Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal, Mr. Smelt *intendant de la province de York*, and Dr. Johnson licenser of the press, *de par le Roi*; and then

I hope you will have a mind to write again, and get nobody to print it.

P. S. This place is more elysian than ever, the river full to the brim, and the church by one touch of Albano's pencil is become a temple, and a principal feature of one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 1, 1780.

I own I was heartily vexed at your not letting me know when you would be at Nuneham, that I might have contrived to meet you there, but what you have sent me would wash out any stain — *all the perfumes of Arabia do sweeten your little hand, the grey goose quill that is therein* (for as Millamant says, I am very fond of the poets to day) *in his heart's blood is wet.* When you write *so* you may let the world want the rest of your blank verse and leave me to be

He who 'ere while the happy garden sung.

Yes, I am sollicitous about your immortal fame, and care abont little else. Tully's last works buoyed up when all his patriot endeavours sunk in the common shore of his country. This country is as lost as his, and nothing can save it. Do you want a new instance? Dr. Hunter that Scotch nightman, had the impudence t'other day to pour out at his anatomic lecture a more

outrageous Smeltiad than Smelt himself, and imputed all our disgraces and ruin to the opposition. Burke was present, and said he had heard of political arithmetic, but never before of political anatomy, yet for a Scot to dare thus in the heart of London, and be borne, is proof enough that the nation itself is lost beyond redemption. The new parliament as I foresaw it would be, is exactly what the last was. Do you require a proof of that too, besides the same standing majority? Here is one: Rigby, who exactly this time twelvemonth tried to betray and blow up the administration, was yesterday its Drawcansir, and I hope you allow he at least can descry the better of the lay; Charles Fox indeed told Lord George Germaine that he was a coward as he had always been, and was stabbing in the dark: yet surely that was unjust; Mr. Adam, and Mr. Fullerton attempted to stab in open daylight — we are above *détours*.

I know no news but that the Prince of Wales is to have a bit of an establishment, yet his court is still to be kept in the nursery; however there will be a little more room, for the right reverend Father in God, Prince Frederic is to be weaned and sent abroad.

His holiness the Archbishop had much ado last night to christen Prince Alfred. I wonder as every body is equally fit for every thing, that they did not make the pontiff and the wet-nurse change offices. Sir John Mordaunt's red riband is to be given to Rodney, and not to Lord Cornwallis — I suppose because not crimson enough for him. There! I am

glad I have got through the chapter of politics; here is something better —

When Macreth served in Arthur's crew,
He said to Rumbold "black my shoe"
To which he answered "ay Bob,"

But when returned from India's land
And grown too proud to brook command—
He sternly answered "nay Bob."

I am told this is at least three year's old, no matter; good ink like wine is not the worse for age.

I wish you had told me if you did not find Nuneham in more beauty than ever. I do not know the Paradise on earth I prefer to it, with its Adam and Eve: who may comfort themselves with having no children, when they recollect that the first born committed murder *with the jaw-bone of an Ass,* a deadly weapon I am sure!

Quaker or not I do object to my valuable *researches.* I never searched any where but in foolish books and for no end but to divert myself. It is such folk as Dr. Milles that *research;* and when they have tumbled out of their depth, call their fall, elucidations. I never pretended to any thing, I never did any thing that signified and I will not subscribe to compliments, which would look as if I liked them, yet I do not pretend to be humble, nor to dislike flattery; but then I chuse to flatter myself, for that is the only flattery that is ever severe. I do not ask when you will come to town for then perhaps you will tell me.

With duty to Miss Fauquier, how I delight to see her

> Throw her broad black exterminating eye,
> And crush some new gilt courtier's loyal lie:

P. S. I am reading L'Abbe Richard's Voiage d'Italie, in six volumes. He pretends to give an account of the History and Governments of the several States, and though it is heavy, it is not bad; but one passage diverted me, speaking of Piperno the Privernum of the Volsci, he mentions Camilla as a Parishioner there, and says "L'Histoire de cette belle guerriere (in Virgil) merite d'être lue." There is a *research* for you. In the eighteenth Century we can cite Virgil for true story as Caxton did three hundred years ago.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Thursday night late, Jan. 4, 1781.

I have not written to you for several reasons. The best were that I had nothing to tell you, that you would wish to know, or like to hear. The worst is that I have been much out of order, first, with a complaint in my bowels, which being weak, the gout took the opportunity and joined it. Then I caught cold, and then was lame in my ankle, which turned to a cough; but all these shapes were I firmly believe the gout, which I have long known for a Harlequin, that can assume any form. I am now pretty well and sit down to chat with you; still I do not know where you are,

but conclude if not at Aston that you will soon be there.

This good town is quite happy, for it has gotten a new plaything, a Dutch War; and the folks that are to gain by Privateering, have persuaded those who are to pay the piper, to dance for joy. In the midst of this exultation came accounts that would make any body shudder, but an overgrown capital, who care for nothing but their daily bread, news, and circenses. All Barbadoes and half Jamaica are annihilated. The inhabitants are buried or famishing. The shipping too has suffered deplorably. The events in America are not more flattering. Leslie, who had taken a walk into two or three open towns, one of which was Norfolk, that we burnt three or four years ago, has been recalled and is re-embarked, to try to save Lord Cornwallis, who has found the country as hostile as it was proclaimed to be friendly, and is in great danger too from five thousand men dispatched by Washington to strengthen Gates. An expedition sent against the Spanish settlements has been so totally destroyed by the climate that not a single man is left alive. The officers to the number of twenty-five are all dead too. My pen revolts at detailing such horrors! If I turn from them I have nothing else to tell you. I used to write of books as well as news, I have not seen one. Raspe's book indeed is in the press and will appear in February; I have been correcting the second sheet this evening.

Before Mr. Stonhewer went out of town he told me

you had left your Fresnoy in the hands of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who is to write notes to it. I complain that you never showed it to me, but am content if it is near being published.

Mrs. Delany has been ill and is become very deaf. I saw Mr. Frederic Montagu with her, and he has been with me and seems perfectly recovered.

My chief business with you is to ask when you come. I suppose you will not condescend to answer, for you have as many *humours* as ancient Pistol. It don't signify; I have a plenary indulgence for the wayward modes of my friends: nay, like them better than the perfections of those I do not love, not that I believe the latter have one. Thus I prefer the letters you do not write to me, to the most sweet epistles from any body from whom I should not wish to hear; you will say, one receives few such. I certainly do not, yet how many men wish for such! what is power but a desire of receiving thousands of flattering solicitations from the Lord knows whom! and an opportunity of being forced to oblige hundreds whom they wish at the Devil! well I am past sixty-three; you will not have me long, and then I think you will be a little sorry. Adieu.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston near Sheffield, Jan, 21, 1781.

Your last found me on a visit in the North (*i. e.*

further North than York) after I had made my appearance at our committee on the third, and taken upon me, not the office of a deputy, but all the principles of one by joining in the resolution which makes the printed address of that body to the electors, &c, the act and deed of the whole. I fear that address will not quite quadrate with your sentiments, but I must be bold to tell you that it does entirely with mine, so much so, that I believe had an association been formed on the same principles thirty years ago, I should have been as ready to have joined it then, as at present, for I know of no moment since I have ever been able to think of political matters that the glaring defects of Parliamentary representation have not appeared to me in the same light which they do at present. However let us not dispute about the matter, as no consequences are ever likely to come from it. Good or bad in my sense, or bad or good in yours. 'Tis the duty of an honest man to declare his sentiments when a public opportunity calls for it, in matters of such a kind as this. I have done so, and have thereby satisfied my conscience.

I now turn to answer what you obligingly call the chief business of your letter, *vid:* when I return to town? to tell you a secret, I left town merely that by appearing at York on the 3rd, I might avoid being appointed one of the deputies, and I shall stay from town merely to avoid altercations with my friends on that subject. I do not mean with you, but with others of whom you wot well. I therefore at present intend

to stay in the country till late in the spring, and then shall be happy to smell your first roses at Strawberry; from thence perhaps go to Nuneham, and in August return to my residentiary imprisonment at York, which begins on the 11th of that month. This is my present plan, and I hope nothing will prevent me from altering it, though I foresee some family matters which may lead me to change my resolution and come sooner.

Mr. Stonhewer will have in a few days a complete copy of my translation of Fresnoy with the text adjoined; in this state it will probably lie some time in the hope of being joined by some of Sir Joshua Reynolds' notes,—the only thing that in these days will probably make it taken notice of by the public. If you choose to look it over, you are very welcome so to do, but it is so dry and didactic that I fear it will tire you, on which account I never thought it worth while to show it to you. If you do read it, all the eulogium I expect will be that "I have bestowed more pains about it than the thing was worth." But I have much greater hopes of your applause on my fourth book of the English Garden, which is now almost finished, and shall go to the York Press very soon; the subject you know is that of Ornamental Buildings, Menageries, Conservatories, &c., and with this I have contrived to interweave a pathetic story throughout, so that the whole book will be (if you can have any idea from the term) an Episodico-didactico-pathetico-politico-farrago, unlike every thing ever was written or will be written. The improvers will like it for its taste, the ladies for its

tenderness; opposition for its Americality; — yet of this last it has no more than was absolutely necessary for the fable, and that so gently touched, that even Bishops will be forced to applaud it for its humanity,— I had almost said Christianity. I wish it was possible to have it published on the Fast morning on this very account.

Pray let me have Raspe's book as soon as published, and let me hope that, in spite of what you are pleased to call my ancient Pistolish humours, that I shall still be favoured with both your political and literary Mercuries, as time serves. I know of no man to whom they will be more acceptable nor to whom they will, on your part, be more charitably administered. I solicit them particularly at present, because I expect Palgrave (who I left at Mr. Weddels) to sojourn with me some time in his way southward. He comes the latter end of this week, and if I have nothing to entertain him with but the London Pacquet, my only intelligencer, he will soon I fear quit his quarters. If therefore you write me any thing that you wish him not to see (for something he must see when a letter comes from you) write, as the Secretaries of State do "most secret" before the paragraph, what is only private and particular he will have a right of perusing. 'You see I have not forgot the mysteries I learned when Gray put me (as he said when I went to Lord Holdernesse's) apprentice to a Secretary of State. And now, having scribbled so much that I must be forced to put it into an envelope, I conclude with desiring and beseeching that I may have

you long, because the longer that I have you, I am sure I shall be the more sorry to part with you, but had I lost you many years ago, assure yourself my sorrow would not have been so little as the Corsican Fairy.

Dixi.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 27, 1781.

We shall certainly have no difference about the Yorkshire Address or directions. It would be very idle to enter into an altercation about the mode of wrapping up a medicine, which the patient never intends to swallow. It is true, I think *the disease* cannot dislike the prescription, for it finds more fault with half of the doctors, than with the distemper, but I look on the case as desperate; unless, as has been known to happen, poverty and fasting should root out the scurvy, when neither the College nor quacks could make any impression, and we are likely to experience whether fasting can expel the kind of devils by which we have been visited. Indeed I have many reasons for not disputing with you, I hate disputes. I have much higher opinion too of your abilities than of my own; and I suspect my own prejudices, and I know that persons who dispute, though with their friends, grow more angry with those they are angry with last, than with their enemies; as I see has happened to your York Association, which has wandered from the

national cause to a county quarrel; and my last reason is that I despair. I think this Country ruined, what may be saved from the general wreck, I do not know, perhaps shall not see. Mr. Hartley's system, had it been adopted, was in my eyes the best to have been pursued, I mean, all possible efforts to put an end to the American War. He has proved that the continuation is positive destruction, any piddling may amuse, or turn attention aside, but in this age of the world to arm a stripling with a sling and a pebble will not fell a giant, but why be metaphoric? ruin comes on with strides. Russia has sent us a thundering monitory: and probably we shall soon be at war with the whole Armed Neutrality, which, like idiots, we imagined meant no more than neutral armament; well, I shall not be very sorry if all Europe combined compels us to make peace. I long to be able to die in quiet, we shall be but a little brow-beaten Island, and as *that* is not the England in which I was born, I must be excused if I do not care about it.

I have been and am still very unhappy about General Conway. With a broken arm he embarked in a storm for Jersey at a moment's warning. He could not mount the ladder of the frigate; a sailor gave him a tug and wrenched that very arm. For two days and nights he was tossed in a furious tempest, could not reach his island, and at last was thrown on Plymouth. He returned quite lame again, with a fever from pain and a violent rheumatism from cold, and has kept his bed almost ever since. His last year's speech has just

been published. Woodfall sent him word that he had notes of it and was going to print it, on which Mr. Conway thought it better to give him his own notes. I like much of it, though he and I do not agree in his sentiments about the recovery of America: for though I do not love to dispute, especially with my best friends, I cannot give up my opinions, if they are my opinions; but then I do not maintain that I must be in the right, except in judging for myself, and that leave which I take, I should be very absurd, nay, very impertinent, if I did not allow, but alas! he and you and I might as well be disputing about the time of keeping Easter: I most gladly turn away from politics to other matters.

Mr. Gilpin has sent me his book and dedication. I thank you for the latter being so moderate, yet he talks of my researches, which makes me smile; I know as Gray would have said, how little I have *researched*, and what slender pretensions are mine to so pompous a term. Apropos to Gray, Johnson's Life, or rather criticism on his Odes, is come out; a most wretched, dull, tasteless, *verbal* criticism. Yet, timid too, but he makes amends, he admires Thompson and Akenside, and Sir Richard Blackmore, and has reprinted Dennis's Criticism on Cato, to save time and swell his pay. In short as usual, he has proved that he has no more ear than taste. Mrs. Montague and all her Mænades intend to tear him limb from limb for despising their moppet Ld. Lyttelton. You will be diverted to hear that Mr. Gibbon has quarrelled with me. He lent me his second volume in the middle of November. I returned it

with a most civil panegyric. He came for more incense, I gave it, but alas! with too much sincerity, I added, "Mr. Gibbon, I am sorry *you* should have pitched on so disgusting a subject as the Constantinopolitan History. There is so much of the Arians and Eunomians, and semi-Pelagians; and there is such a strange contrast between Roman and Gothic manners, and so little harmony between a Consul Sabinus and a Ricimer, Duke of the palace, that though you have written the story as well as it could be written, I fear few will have patience to read it." He coloured; all his round features squeezed themselves into sharp angles; he screwed up his button-mouth and rapping his snuff-box, said, "It had never been put together before"—*so well* he meant to add—but gulped it. He meant *so well* certainly, for Tillemont, whom he quotes in every page has done the very thing. Well from that hour to this I have never seen him, though he used to call once or twice a week; nor has sent me the third volume, as he promised. I well knew his vanity, even about his ridiculous face and person, but thought he had too much sense to avow it so palpably. The History is admirably written, especially in the characters of Julian and Athanasius, in both which he has piqued himself on impartiality — but the style is far less sedulously enamelled than the first volume, and there is flattery to the Scots that would choak any thing but Scots, who can gobble feathers as readily as thistles. David Hume and Adam Smith are *legislators* and sages, but the homage is in-

tended for his patron, Lord Loughborough — so much for literature and its fops: except what interests me a thousand times more and which I kept for the *bonne bouche*, your Fresnoy and 4th Garden; I shall certainly ask for the former the instant I return (for I go to-morrow to Park place, to see Mr. Conway, who cannot yet get to town) but not to interfere a moment with Sir Johua Reynolds, who will execute his task so well — I long too for the Garden — I beg to recommend a note to you; last year a man at Turnham Green fixed up a board with this notice *Ready made Temples sold here.* I would put over the convocation, *Ready made Priests sold here.* The Turnhamite now sells only curricles and whiskys.

If my Gazette is long, remember you ordered me to amuse Mr. Palgrave. I am glad you have him, and will do any thing I can to fix him with you, pray assure him how much I am his. I can say no more, for I have not left half room to thank you for your very kind promise of coming to me in the spring. It amply compensates my disappointment of seeing you here, here I only get a snatch of you for an instant; no where I have enough of you. And which I lament more, for I am not selfish, the World has not enough of you — you know what I mean.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 3, 1781.

With Mr. Palgrave's leave I will answer the essential parts of your letter before I attend to his entertainment, for which I am poorly qualified at present.

I have not Dr. Johnson's lives; I made a conscience of not buying them: however, having a mind to be possessed of these last volumes, (I never even dipped into their predecessors) I enquired if I could buy the lives separately from the edition of the poems; no, the whole are sixty volumes. My purse made a conscience of laying out so much money for criticisms I despise, and for bodies of poetry that I never shall read again, and printed in so small a type that I could not read them if I would. I will try if I can borrow Gray's life for you, and will send it with Mr. Conway's pamphlet, and will consult Mr. Stonhewer. I think you will not deem the dull comment on Gray worth your notice, if you do, pray do not forget Soame Jennyns's Ode that is levelled at you both.

You oblige me infinitely by your concern for Mr. Conway; I left him better, or should not have left him, and had a still better account last night; yet this last shock on the neck of another has broken him exceedingly, and I doubt he will be long before he masters it. He is indeed far too virtuous for the times, yet they are such times that shew such men! You will marvel to hear that on Thursday there was so large a

minority as 149 on Ch. Fox's motion for censuring the preferment of Palisser, but there were 214 that applauded it, particularly Governor Johnston, for with or without a t. that is a detestable name, and a corrupt one; I would as soon be a Macgregor.

The stocks believe that there is another rough rescript come from Russia, but though money is the only deity in vogue the greatest bigots do not mind their own Oracle.

I have told you all I know, so little, that I fear Mr. Palgrave would not stay five minutes if you have no better a correspondent; what can I do? oh! I will tell him a story. It is true, mine are not so long as Schehezarade's, but if he is as easily amused as Shah Baham of ever-hearing memory, I will answer as far as half a dozen go, to tell him as improbable tales as any in the Arabian nights, or in the newspapers; yet the one I select is not of that kind, nor unluckily, new to you; but when great personages of old ordered their fools to divert their guests, I fear they were forced to hear the repetition of stale jokes — aye and I will warrant laughed heartily at them, again and again, as their successors might do now. Raspe's book goes on but slowly, I know not why; you shall have it the instant it is finished. It is not published by subscription. I am at the expense, and am to pay myself by the sale, if I can, which I doubt will not happen, for my own last volume of Painters does not go off.

Mr. Gilpin tells me, on my moving him to publish the charming book you shewed me, that he would try

Aquatinta if he could learn the secret; I shall consult Sandby — nay, I believe it is no longer a secret.

Mr. Warton's third volume is advertized for the end of this month, and Kate Macgraham has published two more; yet does not advance beyond the death of Algernon Sidney. I believe England will be finished before her History.

On Monday is to commence Lord George Gordon's trial, which I suppose will obliterate Holland and Russia and every thing else, even Vestris. If I hear any circumstances worth telling you and not in the newspapers, you shall know them directly but it is difficult to anticipate the daily chronicles. Adieu!

P.S. Have you heard that your Archbishop went to the India House to vote for Benfield? don't tell me that there is no Metempsychosis. I am sure Dr. Markham was in Peru when the inhabitants were broiled to make them discover their gold, and held a crucifix in his hand. His Grace was going to take the oath with his beaver on; the clerk humbly remonstrated, and he took it off, which was surprising, for perhaps Cardinals swear covered; and when he supported Lord Pigot's deposer, methinks his hat looked very red.

Lord Harcourt has just been here, and tells me he believes he can procure the method of the Aquatinta for Mr. Gilpin.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Monday noon, Feb. 5, 1781.

Perhaps you think, by my letters riding on the back of one another, that I am going to tell you of my Lord George Gordon; No, poor soul! he is at this minute in Westminster Hall, and I know nothing about him. Some how or other I dare to say the Constitution will be brought in guilty, for Lord Mansfield is the judge. But I have other guess things to say to you: I have got your Fresnoy; it is a new proof of what I have long thought, that there is nothing you cannot do if you please. This is the best translation I ever saw; there have been disputes between literal and paraphrastic translations, and no wonder, for a third sort, the true was not known; your's preserves the sense and substance of every sentence, but you make a new arrangement, and state and express the author's thought better than he could; Horace would have excused you if you had been simply familiar in a didactic poem, but you would not be so excused, nor allow yourself negligence in your poetry. You have exchanged the poverty of Fresnoy's Latin for Pope's rich English, and every epithet contributes its quota to every precept and developes it. This is in the style of none of your other works, and though more difficult, as masterly as any: in short, I have examined it with admiration, and only wonder how, with such powers and knowledge of the subject, you could confine yourself to the *matter* of the

original. The shackles of translation have neither cramped your style nor rendered it obscure; you have enriched your author without deviating, and improved his matter without adding to it, which is an atchievement indeed: — I do not flatter you — nay, you know I am frank enough upon most occasions, and were I porter of the Temple of Fame, I would not open the door to one of your babes, if it was not like you.

I think I shall soon compass a transcript at least of Gray's life by Demogorgon for you. I saw him last night at Lady Lucan's, who had assembled a *blue stocking* meeting in imitation of Mrs. Vesey's Babels. It was so blue, it was quite Mazarine-blue. Mrs. Montague kept aloof from Johnson, like the West from the East. There were Soame Jenyns, Persian Jones, Mr. Sherlocke, the new court wit Mr. Courtney, besides the out-pensioners of Parnassus; Mr. Wraxhall was not, I wonder why, and so will he, for he is popping into every spot where he can make himself talked of, by talking of himself; but I hear he will come to an untimely beginning in the House of Commons.

I shall return your Fresnoy as soon as I have gone through it once more, that Sir Joshua may go to work. I have proposed a subject to him that he seems to like; *little children brought to Christ.* He will not make them all brothers, like Albano's Cupids.

Pray look into the Critical Review but one, there you will find that David Hume in a saucy blockheadly note calls Locke, Algernon Sidney, and Bishop Hoadly, *despicable writers.* I believe that ere long the Scotch

will call the English *lousy!* and that Goody Hunter will broach the assertion in an anatomic lecture. Not content with debasing and disgracing us as a nation by losing America, destroying our Empire, and making us the scorn and prey of Europe, the Scotch would annihilate our patriots, martyrs, heroes and geniuses. Algernon Sidney, Lord Russel, King William, the Duke of Marlborough, Locke, are to be traduced and levelled, and with the aid of their fellow labourer Johnson, who spits at them while he tugs at the same oar, Milton, Addison, Prior, and Gray are to make way for the dull forgeries of Ossian, and such wights as Davy, and Johnny Hume, Lord Kaims, Lord Monboddo, and Adam Smith! — Oh! if you have a drop of English ink in your veins, rouse and revenge your country! Do not let us be run down and brazened out of all our virtue, genius, sense, and taste, by Laplanders and Bœotians, who never produced one original writer in verse or prose.

Tuesday Morning.

My servants tell me, for I have yet seen nobody else to day, that Lord George was acquitted at five this morning — a wise manœuvre truly has been made; they punish him severely for eight months, and cannot convict him! now he will be a confessor. I must finish for I have just heard that Lady Orford is dead, and must write to my family and order mourning &c. I doubt this letter is no retaining fee to Mr. Palgrave.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 9, 1781.

The lost sheep is found; but I have more joy in one just person than in ninety and nine sinners that do not repent; in short, the renegade Gibbon is returned to me, after ten or eleven weeks, and pleads having been five of them at Bath. I immediately forgave even his return; yet pray do not imagine that I write to announce this recovery; no, it is to impart what he told me. He says that somebody asked Johnson if he was not afraid that *you* would resent the freedoms he has taken with Gray, "*No, no, Sir, Mr. Mason does not like rough handling.*" I hope in the Muses that you will let him see which had most reason to fear rough handling. The saucy Caliban! I don't know when I shall get you his blubber, but I have sent again to my bookseller about it.

I have restored your Fresnoy with regret. The more I have studied it the better I like it,—it will always be standard. I repeat that there is the precise sense of every sentence, and yet they are not translated. They are like the same pair of legs, before being taught to dance and afterwards. Fresnoy gives the precepts, and you tell him how to state and enounce them. As I have ambition of appertaining to your poem, I humbly beg leave to amend one word, in a certain line towards the end, for

'Sons of her choice and *sharers* of her fire,'

read 'Partners.'

You will laugh, especially after my last letter, when I tell you that I am chosen Honorary Member of the Society of the Antiquaries of Scotland. I received the notification since I began this letter. Lord Buchan, the founder (under the patronage of Saint Bute) was many years ago a little my acquaintance; I have not even seen him at least these dozen years, nor ever had any correspondence with him but once, about two years ago, when he wrote to ask me what portraits of Scottish kings or queens I knew of in England. It is impossible to have less respect than I have for societies of antiquaries, who seldom do any thing but grow antiquated themselves. However, as an honorary title exacts neither function nor *vote*, I have accepted it civilly, especially as it will show contempt for our own fools, from amongst whom I scratched out my name. However I conceive that the bones of my memory may sometime or other be dug up and burned at Edinburgh, as Peter Martyr's were at Oxford.

My new dignity of F. S. S. S. will not comport with amusing Mr. Palgrave to-day. I have taken an oath on Ossian to have no imagination, no invention; for forgeries are *in*tentions, not in*ven*tions. Still I shall not wear my new plaid robes and blue bonnet beyond my inauguration week, and shall soon relapse into a South Briton; though if I should say *The* 15, *The* 45, you will remember my connection north of the Tweed.

P.S. Is not it droll that I, who never sought for, canvassed for, or received any mark of distinction in my days, should receive a compliment from Edinburgh?

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Monday night, Feb. 19, 1781.

It has not been from want of materials, if I had chosen to work them up, that I have not written to you very lately; but though I hold it delectable enough in one's dotage to prattle and gossip of the doings of the courts of one's younger days, I do not think it so decorous to invert one's Brantôme-hood and limp after and repeat the tattle of drawing rooms that are scarce fledged. A sovereign may be philosopher or concentred enough in his own rays to disregard terrestrial tempests, and to be more occupied by the spots in his own orbit than by the mouldering away of his empire. For my part I have too much mortal clay about me to soar so much above matter, and to divert myself only with the music or discord of the spheres. All this tedious proem is but to say that I have not wanted news, aye, and news that employs this whole town, if I would have condescended to tell you who has or who has not been at Cumberland House, or at the Queen's ball, or how King George and his brother, Duke Henry, have quarrelled about the servants of the Prince of Wales not being suffered to dine with His Royal Highness Duke Henry, and how Duke Henry was not invited to the ball at the queen's house, with a deal of such scimble scamble stuff, which has totally obliterated the memory of all the wars that we have with all the world. Do not be surprised; if we attended to any thing above such puerilities we should not be in

the situation we are. I still do believe that distress will at last open our eyes, but I believe too, that we shall soon shut them again. There is not energy enough left in us to produce any effect. One may judge from the *nature* of our dissipations as much as from the dissipation itself. The age that souses into every amusement and folly that is presented to it, has not imagination enough to strike out any thing of itself. Mrs. Cornelys, Almack and Dr. Graham are forced to advertise diversions by public sale, and everybody goes indolently and mechanically to them all, without choice or preference. They who are *called the people of fashion* or the *ton* have contributed nothing of their own but *being too late;* nay, actually do go to most public diversions after they are over. Your Yorkshire reformers, though not content with Mr. Burke's bill, will gather no prophetic comfort from the treatment it received to-day. I was at Mrs. Delany's this evening, when Mr. Frederic Montagu arrived from the House. They had put off the second reading till Friday, because Wednesday is the fast day, and Thursday Vestris's benefit. God has his day, a French dancer his, and then the national senate will be at leisure to think whether it will save three halfpence-farthing out of eighteen millions that are to be raised in hopes of protracting the war, till we want at least eighteen millions more.

Was not you edified with the last Gazette, when we expected to hear that all Washington's army was catched in a drag-net, and that Lord Cornwallis had

subdued and pacified all Virginia and Carolina, we were modestly told that his Lordship and his handful of men had been sick, but thank you are a little better; and that Colonel Ferguson was beaten, and Colonel Tarleton had had a puny advantage; all which we knew two months ago.

To-day we are very sorry for what however we do not care a straw about. Well the Grand Fleet, that was to fetch home Gibraltar and place it out of harm's way in the Isle of Sky, cannot sail. Governor Johnstone the honestest man in the world, has written to Lord Hilsborough (for he would not trust Lord Sandwich whom a fortnight ago he thought the second man in honesty in *south* Britain) complaining that the Fleet is rotten, and cannot sail, nay he has sent up a yard and half of worm-eaten plank which he humbly begs His Majesty himself will taste and be convinced. I do not answer for a syllable of truth in this narrative, though it was told me by a Scottish Earl who never gave a vote in his days against any court.

I have not yet been able to get you Gray's Life. My Bookseller had blundered, and after trusting to him so long, he brought me the preceding volumes: but I am on a new scent, and hope at least to send you a transcript of that single life; though I wish you to see the whole set, nay, those old ones; I dipped into them, and found that the tasteless pedant admires that wretched buffoon Dr. King, who is but a Tom Brown in rhyme; and says that the Dispensary, that *Chef d'œuvre*, can scarce make itself read. This is pre-

judice on both sides, equal to that monkish railer Père Garasse. But Dr. Johnson has indubitably neither taste nor ear, criterion of judgment, but his old woman's prejudices, where they are wanting, he has no rule at all, he prefers Smith's poetic, but insipid and undramatic Phædra and Hippolitus to Racine's Phédre, the finest tragedy in my opinion of the French Theatre, for with Voltaire's leave, I think it infinitely preferable to Iphigenie and so I own I do Britannicus, Mahomet, Alzire, and some others; but I will allow Johnson to dislike Gray, Garth, Prior, aye and every genius we have had, when he cries up Blackmore, Thompson, Akenside and Dr. King; nay, I am glad that the measure of our dullness is full. I would have this era stigmatize itself in every respect, and be a proverb to the nations around, and to future ages. We want but Popery to sanctify every act of blindness. Hume should burn the Works of Locke, and Johnson of Milton, and the Atheist and the Bigot join in the same religious rites, as they both were pensioned by the same piety. Oh! let us not have a ray of sense or throb of sensation left to distinguish us from brutes! let total stupefaction palliate our fall, and let us resemble the Jews, who when they were to elect a God, preferred a calf!

Tuesday.

Upon stricter inquiry I find that Johnson has not yet published his New Lives, but only given away a few copies.

An account is said to be come from New York that above two thousand of Washington's army have left him for want of pay, but remain encamped at some distance; have refused to join Clinton and have sent to the Congress that they will return to Washington if they are paid, if not that they will not disband. Governor Johnstone's remonstrance is already whittled down to a complaint of one particular ship not being ready.

2nd P.S. Lord Harcourt has got me from Taylor at Bath the method of the Aquatinta, which I have sent to Mr. Stonhewer this morning to transmit to him.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, Feb. 28, 1781.

At the last day of the month I should be ungrateful beyond measures if I did not return you my best and sincerest thanks for four delightful letters, which in the course of it amused me even in its bleakest and most tempestuous moments; was Palgrave here (but he left me three days ago) he would join his thanks with mine in the greatest cordiality. He is an excellent creature, has infinite original humour, and what is better, a good heart.

Mr. Conway's speech suits my political ideas very much, as well as my ecclesiastical, his stricture on a

certain bench is highly to my taste, I can assure you; and I admire him the more for having spoken out on the occasion.

The Tale (as you remember) I had seen before and had told you how much I liked it, I can only say that Palgrave was equally entertained with it.

I am sorry you have had so much trouble about Dr. Johnson's hypercriticisms, 'tis true I should like to see them, but I can wait with much patience, I am rather more desirous of picking up a few authentic anecdotes of Mrs. Montague's quarrel with him, and whether it has proceeded to an absolute breach. A less matter than this seems to be, has heretofore given rise to a Mock Epic, but I need say no more, I dare say your imagination can throw it into Cantos.

I ought to thank you for your favourable (I fear too favourable) opinion of my translation of Fresnoy; 'twas a work begun in early youth, and which crept on at very distant and idle intervals, it was near being published twenty years ago, but Mr. Gray and Dr. Hurd thought a translation of such a poem would do me little credit, yet now when I resolved upon it, for the sake of inducing Sir Joshua to comment upon it, I will own I revised it so very carefully, that I do not think that there are ten lines in the whole that are precisely the same they were when my two critics saw it, and as by practice the knack of rhyming is much more my own, so I really do hope in point of versification (considered as a translation) it will pass muster, I cannot however think it has much original ease about it. I have heard lately

from Mr. Gilpin, who seems much flattered by your good opinion of him, but the post is come and will not wait even to give me time to sign and seal and say how much I am

yours

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, March 3, 1781.

I began to be a little out of humour at your silence; your letter came in time just as I was going to seal up my lips too. An echo that will repeat one word twenty times will stop, unless you feed it anew, though but with a single word. This time, no more than the echo, had I any need to lift up my voice. The War is gone to sleep, the Parliament gone to bed, and Vestris himself if he had any competitor would go out of fashion. Invention except of political lies is not the gift of this age. For want of subject of admiration, Sir Joseph York is called by the newspapers a great man, and for want of taste the Monthly Reviewers call Mr. Haley a great Poet, though he has no more ear or imagination than they have. As if any body loved reading or did read, Mr. Gibbon has treated them with his vast two volumes. I have almost finished the last and some parts are more entertaining than the other and yet it has tired me, and so I think it did himself. There is no spirit in it, nor does any one Chapter interest one more than another; which is commonly the

case of compilations, especially in such an eloquent age as this. Though these volumes are not polished like the first, you see that he is never thinking of his subject, but intending to make his periods worthy of himself. Then he is often obscure, for from the prodigious quantity of matter he frequently is content with alluding to his original, and who for mercy would recur to Sozomen, Jornandez and Procopius? Then having both the Eastern and Western Empires on his hands at once, and nobody but *Imbecilles* and their Eunuchs at the head, one is confused with two subjects, that are quite alike, though quite distinct, and in the midst of this distraction enters a deluge of Alans, Huns, Goths, Ostrogoths and Visigoths, who with the same features and characters are to be described in different terms, without any essential variety, and he is to bring you acquainted with them when you wish them all at the bottom of the Red Sea. He has made me a present of these volumes and I am sure I shall have fully paid for them when I have finished them; one paragraph I must select which I believe the author did not intend should be so applicable to the present moment. "The Armorican provinces of Gaul and the greatest part of Spain were thrown into a state of disorderly independence by the confederations of the Bagaudæ; and the Imperial ministers pursued with proscriptive laws and ineffectual arms the rebels whom they had made." End of Chap. xxxv. This is also a sample of the style which is translating bad Latin into English, that may be turned into Classic Latin, I was charmed as I owned

with the enamel of the first volume, but I am tired by this rhetoric diction and wish again for Bishop Burnet's *And so*. They who write of their own times love or hate the actors and draw you to their party, but with the fear of the *laws* of history before his eyes, a compiler affects you no more than a Chancery suit about the entail of an estate with whose owners you was not acquainted. Poor Lord Lyttelton was of all that tribe the most circumspect and consequently the most insipid. His Henry II raises no more passions than Burne's Justice of Peace. Apropos, *poor Lyttelton* were the words of offence. Mrs. Vesey sounded the trumpet. It has not I believe produced any altercation, but at a blue-stocking meeting held by Lady Lucan. Mrs. Montagu and Dr. Johnson kept at different ends of the chamber and set up altar against altar there. There she told me as a mark of her high displeasure that she would never ask him to dinner again. I took her side and fomented the quarrel, and wished I could have made Dagon and Ashtaroth scold in Coptic.

I am happy that you like Mr. Conway's speech, and the Concio ad Clerum. The Duke of Grafton with whom I dined the other day with Mr. Conway and Stonhewer, told us that the Flamen most offended is Bishop Keene. I do believe he is one of the most sore, for he is one of the most putrid, but he must be ten times more angry at his own son, who spoke on Monday *for* Burke's Bill. Lord Chatham's second son, they say was far more like *his* father. Sheridan

demolished Courtney who, old George Cavendish said well, is Deputy Buffoon to Lord North.

I am sorry you have lost Palgrave, and wish you could tempt him to meet you at Strawberry hill.

Sir Joshua I doubt, will not have time soon to expedite your Fresnoy; it must be much altered, or I should marvel at Gray; for Bishop Hurd you know I never admired him, even before he was mitred. All his writings are tame, without a grain of originality. I shall always maintain that you have made a masterly poem from a very moderate one, without adding to the Author's sense. If that is not the perfection of translation, I do not know what is. I am very sensible that you could have added more gold but who ever gilt so well? This I take to be the precise definition of a good translation, which improves base metal without adding ore. Adieu.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

March 9, 1781.

I have at last got for you Johnson's criticism on Gray; there is not the introductory life, but this is all I have, and very oddly, Mr. Bentley sent it to me in manuscript, from indignation as he is a true admirer of Gray; and he tells me that he received it from a correspondent at Oxford, who adds, that it is to appear in two months *to the making all Oxford too happy.* I send you this genuine expression, and I trust you will

not forget the feature; you will find ample matter for satire and ridicule, besides the hints I have given you already from his other lives. I depend on your asserting your indisputable right to succession, by vindicating your lawful predecessors.

To my great joy, I have done with the Goths and Huns and Visigoths; you will not read of them, but pray when you have an opportunity, turn to the very last page of the last volume, and to the very conclusion; it will be worth your while. I am now embarked in another almost as tedious a navigation, Mr. Warton's third volume. This is the third immense History of the life of Poetry, and still Poetry is not yet born, for Spenser will not appear till the fourth tome. I perceive it is the certain fate of an antiquary, to become an old fool. Mr. Warton thinks Prior spoiled his original in his imitation of Henry and Emma. Mercy on us, what shall we come to in these halcyon days! *O for some gentle James &c.* Last week the stocks pricked up their ass's ears six inches higher. Austria and Russia were to make peace for us. France and Spain had accepted the Imperial mediations, and the *great* Sir Joseph drew on his boots and was galloping over sea to Vienna; Sir Joseph's boots are still on, but France they say has said nothing, and Spain has said no, and we, I believe, protest against the independence of America, which we can very well afford, for we have funded only twenty-one millions to borrow twelve; for my part, I wish for peace, and I do not care how bad an one; our glory is gone, our constitution gone, our sense

gone, but I would save the lives that are left, and then Mr. Gibbon and the University of Oxford may hunt for and find what topics of panegyric they please. Adieu! I must send away my packet to Mr. S. and desire him to find a conveyance for it.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

DEAR SIR, Aston, March 29, 1781.

My laziness makes me put off writing to everybody till it becomes necessary to make an apology, and laziness hates apologizing so much that then she becomes infinitely more strong in her powers of procrastination. I will however, as the Psalmist says, "break her bonds assunder, and cast away her cords from me." I will thank you again and again for your two letters, without saying more than I have said for not having answered them. I will thank you, nay, my laziness shall thank you too for saving us the trouble of reading Mr. Gibbon, and for doing your best to save us from reading T. Warton. But in this latter author's antiquarian mud we are already above knee deep, and we must on as fast as we are able. There was somebody, I think it was D'Alembert, that out of two thick quartos of German, made a hundred duodecimo pages about Queen Christina which were the prettiest and pleasantest reading in the world. I trust that posterity (if posterity deserves it) will be blest with some future anecdotist like one I could name (who has proved, con-

trary to his own *ipse dixit*, "that a man may be an antiquarian without becoming an old fool") that will select out of these three quartos, Anecdotes of English Poetry in two or three small octavos, about the size, for instance, of the Royal and Noble Authors; and should this be the case, our Oxonian will not have written in vain. Nevertheless let us do him justice; where he writes on a good subject few write better, and what he has said of Lord Surrey is quite what it should be; the mischief is that he thinks all subjects equally good, and those best that are oldest. And now let me thank you for your transcript of Johnson, which is certainly the meanest business that ever disgraced literature. He shall certainly have his reward when my English Garden (the fourth book of which is now in the York press) is out of my hands. I do not think I could do it any way better than by what I more than half did three years ago in a certain monologue, of which you saw the greatest part, but then it would certainly tell tales. I have a great mind to weave it into a mock epic could I get the least hint of a squabble between Queen Ashtaroth and Dagon. If that matter goes further, pray give me early intelligence; a grave answer would do him too much honour; and to whip him on the back of his patrons, would suit my fancy best. However, be assured, I mean to turn myself entirely to that topic soon, in some way or other.

You have set my friend Mr. Gilpin, I fear, an impracticable task, and yourself, with Lord Harcourt, one much more so, by advising him to print his Tours,—

subscribers will never be found sufficient to pay the expence. You should have contrived to have done it by Lord North's assistance, out of the surplus of the new loan. He has written to me on the subject, and I have advised him to risk only some detached part by way of experiment.

I find our deputies are obliged to undeputize themselves before they can petition parliament. I have little hopes that a petition of forty country gentlemen will be much attended to by the present parliament. I think they will put them under custody of the Serjeant-at-arms for their presumption, if not into Newgate. No matter, all is over, and I should not have broached this topic, had it not been merely to fill my paper. Did you set the rose-leaves of your *treillage* at Strawberry on fire by your illuminations for Santa Eustacia?

Yours most truly

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

March 30, 1781.

You flatten our correspondence so much by never answering my letters, that I have not spirit to keep it up; it would look as if I delighted in writing. You have not even told me that you received the MS. of Gray's life; surely that did not leave you totally without matter for a line! The country I allow does not

furnish topics like the capital, and yet unless I wrote of Vestris and the follies of fashion, what else makes sensation here? the departure of the fleet that leaves us as exposed as we were before the conquest to Danes and Saxons, makes none: a much more distant revolution than might happen here does make impression, or I should still not write. Adieu, the golden sands of the Ganges (all the waters of which would not wash away our corruptions) adieu the diamonds of Bengal! Rumbold is the last waiter at White's, whose babe will be rocked in a cradle of gems; and Sykes the last footman, who will be created a baronet for being worth some lacks of roupees! The Nabob of Arcot will have no more members of Parliament for retainers, Lord Sandwich will carry no more gold muslins cross the Park, and should Lord North want another loan of twelve millions to enrich Mr. Drummond and his clerks and livery servants, he must not reckon on the Indian Company. Hyder Ali has dispersed all our visions of endless wealth; Lord Clive usurped, Lord Pigot died; and Paul Benfield has been a rascal, and has returned under the sanction of Parliament and of his Grace of York to be one again in vain! yes, India and America are alike escaping out of the talons of the Scotch. Cargoes of bad news arrived on Tuesday from East and West. Tarleton is beaten, and the twenty thousand pounds that purchased Arnold's treachery are likely to have been bestowed to no purpose. Another disgrace is that the Dutch manifesto convicts us of a notorious and gross lie, that of affirm-

ing that they refused an answer to our complaint of Van Berchel; that lie we endeavour to support by hinting to the Amsterdammers in all the court newspapers, that they would do *well* to tear him and the magistrates piecemeal.

Having passed the bounds of all shame, we have returned the forbearance of the French at the Grenades to our proprietors, by the contrary practice at St. Eustatia; Lord George Germaine however out of modesty or pride has refused to avow this scandalous proceeding under his hand, in his answer to our merchants who have remonstrated against it.

Your cloth, who will not be behind hand in any effronterie, take occasion to distinguish their zeal. Bishop *Proteus* of Chester affirms the Roman Catholics decrease, an excellent reason for flinging indulgencies at their heads, to invite them back; Dr. Bagot has published the silliest, emptiest, of all petty pamphlets against a Dr. Bell, who has written on the Sacrament, and the whole purpose of the former is to have an opportunity of calling Bishop Hoadley, Socinian. I am glad the monk Bagot and the atheist Hume meet cordially in abuse on the excellent Bishop. Tucker has published his attack on Locke — In short we shall not stop till all virtue and all sense, as well as all Europe, are our enemies; I am sick of writing on such themes, and since you do not answer me, this letter is long enough.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Sunday night, April 1, 1781.

Your letter and mine crossed each other. As you have made *amende honorable* for your indolence, it is but equitable on my side to absolve you. Nay you merit more by the promise you make me, and like a fond mother that taps a favourite, I am ready to shower sugar-plumbs on you to cure the slap that did not hurt you. Seriously the mock heroic would be the highest completion of my wishes; it is what I have always recommended to you, not only as best suited to your genius, but as uniting those two distant talents, both which you eminently possess,— harmonious poetry and wit. Pray let Dr. Johnson feel that a Dispensary can make itself be read, and I will answer that it will continue to be so. The quarrel with Ashtaroth, I believe, has gone no farther, and will not furnish above an episode, but I have sent you materials enough, I am sure, of late, to stock you with congenial topics, unless a system to recall the monkish ages can fail being a magazine. In the meantime your Garden shall be welcome, though like his Majesty's herb-woman, I hope it will only strew flowers before the grand procession.

If you will not read the Constantinopolitan Historian, you will at least not disdain to turn to a particular passage or two: look at page 46 of Vol. II, on the reduction of the legions, beginning at the words, " the

same timid policy." Lord John says, he is persuaded that Gibbon had thrown in that and such sentences and sentiments when he was paying court to Charles Fox, and forgot to correct them after his change.

You are very good in condescending to make an apology for mentioning your deputies. It would become me rather to ask your pardon for differing with you on any part of that business. My discordance was founded on the unhappy knowledge I have of my countrymen, who, I was sure, as it proved, would be glad to seize any opportunity of division to withdraw from their engagements. Mr. W.'s success had inspired him with too much confidence. Whoever will govern must submit to be governed; I mean that one must yield in many points to carry the principal. But I will say no more on that head, since the moment has been lost; yet I do not envy those who are delivered from domestic alarms. The complaisance of the parliament does but ensure ruin; every vote that is carried plunges us deeper, and had the American or Spanish or Dutch war been resisted, it had been happy for England. Falsehood demanded every vote, and gold procured every one. The mines will fail, and then truth will emerge, though much too late. As to Mr. Gilpin, Lord Harcourt's plan and mine was that he should execute the prints himself, which we thought would be easy, if he could learn the aquatinta, which seems an easy and expeditious method, for one that can draw so well. As to encouragement, we do not flatter ourselves that we have interest, and I am sure there is no advising

any body to risk expense at present; extravagance itself begins to calculate.

As this is only a Postscript to my last, it is long enough. I shall carry it to town to-morrow and add any thing that I hear before Tuesday evening. Last night's Gazette has endeavoured to wipe out Tarleton's defeat by some meagre advantages since, and the bells here have rung for them, for all chimes are retained in the pay of the government, and perhaps the insurrection at Amsterdam went into the tune, though I know that even the great Sir Joseph Yorke, as the newspapers call him, did not believe it on Friday night, and there is no mail come since.

Tuesday evening.

I may seal my letter, for I have nothing to add.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

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Strawberry Hill, April 14, 1781.

As all our politics are at sea, I have none to send you, for the only land-topic of that class I am in the dark about, I mean the Chancellor's mumbling of Lord Sandwich and Lord Bathurst; for though tythes were the occasion, they certainly were not the cause, some quarrel there is supposed to be in the Cabinet, I know not what nor care.

Your Primate on Sunday was sevennight, preached a sermon at the Royal Chapel, that sounded as sour,

and probably had much the same foundation as the Chancellor's discontent. The shaft seemed to be aimed at his quondam pupil, as it reproved unbounded indulgence of the passions, and satirized the ambition of being an expert charioteer, then daring higher, His Grace condemned the waste of the lives of subjects from the obstinate pursuit of empty titles of sovereignty. *Diable, ou en sommes nous?*

Dean Milles is going to revive Rowley, yet so as by laudanum. Mr. Bryant too is a convert; I asked him t'other night at Lord Dacre's, if he could seriously believe that Rowley was the author of what Chatterton ascribed to him. He said, "oh no, he was persuaded those poems were much *older* than Rowley;" I smiled, and begged he would not take it ill, if I told him what happened to me a few years ago: Governor Pownall had tired me to death with reading a dissertation on the ruins of a building in Ireland, which he maintained were the remains of a Temple built by the Danes on the foundation of a much older edifice raised by some nation who lived so long ago that nobody knows who they were, I did not dare to add that I suppose they were the Ammonians.

Sir Joshua Reynolds has lent me Dr. Johnson's Life of Pope, which Sir Joshua holds to be a *chef d'œuvre*. It is a most trumpery performance and stuffed with all his crabbed phrases and vulgarisms, and much trash as anecdotes; you shall judge yourself;—he says, that all he can discover of Pope's correspondent Mr. Cromwell is that he used to hunt in a tye-wig. The

Elegy on the Unfortunate Lady he says, *signifies the amorous fury of a raving girl;* and yet he admires the subject of Eloisa's Epistle to Abelard. The machinery in the Rape of the Lock he calls *combinations of skilful genius with happy casuality*, in English I guess a *lucky thought;* publishing proposals is turned into *emitting* them. But the 66th page is still more curious, it contains a philosophic solution of Pope's not transcribing the whole Iliad as soon as he thought he should, and it concludes with this piece of bombast nonsense, *he that runs against time has an antagonist not subject to casualties.* Pope's House here he calls *the House to which his residence afterwards procured so much celebration*, and that *his vanity produced a grotto where necessity enforced a passage;* and that, *of his intellectual character, the constituent and fundamental principle was good sense, a prompt and intuitive perception of consonance and propriety.* Was poor good sense ever so unmercifully overlaid by a babbling old woman! How was it possible to marshal words so ridiculously? He seems to have read the ancients with no view but of pilfering polysyllables, utterly insensible to the graces of their simplicity, and these are called standards of biography! I forgot he calls Lord Hervey's challenging Pulteney, *summoning him to a duel.* Hurlothrumbo talked plain English in comparison of this wight on stilts, but I doubt I have wearied you,— send me something to put my mouth in taste again.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, April 21, 1781.

As I have been reading Mr. Gibbon I am rather sceptical, and as I have been reading also Dr. Tucker, I am somewhat of a blackguard; I therefore distrust your anecdote about my diocesan. I will not however call you a rank fibber, as the last mentioned writer calls people rank republicans, but still I must say I distrust your veracity on this point, but not from an internal but external cause, because I cannot conceive how he could preach on the Sunday you mention, as I am enough versed in the etiquette of Lent preachments to know his turn did not come till either Good Friday, or Easter Sunday. Pray clear up this matter if possible, for I would fain have this anecdote uncontrovertibly true, and should be glad too of more particulars; this said diocesan has issued out his mandate concerning a visitation in June, which will tye me down to my parish till it be over.

As I have in my time kept worse company than you ever did, and am more used to vulgarity, I have been able to read great part of the Dean of Gloucester's long expected attack on Locke, but I am sure you will not be able to read a single page of it, you could as soon drink gin with a Wapping landlady. I wish however I could prevail on you to read the last paragraph which sums up his whole doctrine, and which is

neither more nor less than that of his worthy brother in the old song of the Vicar of Bray.

> That this is law I will maintain
> Unto my dying day, Sir,
> That whatsoever King shall reign
> I'll be the Vicar of Bray, Sir.

As this is the most commodious doctrine which ever was invented for churchmen, no wonder that the reverend bench revised it so cordially, and spoke so handsomely of it when it was handed to their inspection in an unpublished state.

I thank you for your last farrago of Dæmogorgon Jargon. How can poor Sir Joshua be such an oaf to admire such a writer, when his own style is so free from those blemishes. I shrewdly suspect he will shew Johnson my translation, and that as he will certainly abuse it, Sir Joshua will lay aside the thought of annotations. Be this as it may, I will give him fair time for the purpose, as I am in no haste about publishing it.

Pray does Raspe's book proceed towards a publication, I wish much to see it. You find I am reduced to asking of questions, and how should it be otherwise, when I have nothing for you of information. Was I to tell you that I drink Hyder Ally's health every day in a glass of port, perhaps it might prompt you to pledge me in your glass of orange juice, pray do so. I am sorry however that the news of his victories come so rapidly. I wish we might hear no more of him till Lord North has unchartered the East India Company, and then the

more the merrier. I remember five years ago that mad woman who works in wax told me when I went to her rarce show "that if there was a God and a providence, which she firmly believed there was, and hoped (as I seem'd to be a parson) that I believed the same, that the Americans would never be conquered;" so I am inclined to rest my friend Hyder Ally's success on the same foundation. I shall hope having spun out this scrawl to a competent length you will continue your wanted kindness to me, and give me something for my nothing; in this hope I remain

yours very truly

W. M.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, April 25, 1781.

Though the list of Lent Preachers may contradict me ever so flatly, the fact was not a jot less true. I heard it three hours after the delivery of the sermon from one that was present and several times since; nay it gave so much offence to the *charioteer* (who was also, nobody knows why called a *gladiator)* that he swore, "d — n the scoundrel, I will never forgive him." The insult surprised even in London, hardened as we are to inconsistency. I know no more about it, but that the sermon was understood as a satire, there is no doubt, nor that it was so taken by the object of it. That the *intention* may be denied is very likely, for

what will not a Bishop say or unsay? for instance; My Lord of Oxford dining lately at Lambeth, declaimed against Dr. Bell for supporting Hoadley's Doctrine on the Sacrament. Another Divine there present told me, that he actually has in print an anonymous pamphlet written formerly by *Butler himself* against Warburton for censuring Hoadley on that occasion, but is there a yard of lawn in England more dirty than Butler's? If I meet with Tucker's book I will to oblige you, read the last sentence, but I certainly will not buy it, nor will pay for following their clergy through every kennel. In truth, I have a mind to save my money and my eyes, and read no more. We are in a state of reprobation, and have no more sense left, than principles. It is but just now that I have waded through three thousand lines of a Poem called Burlesque, which diverted me as much as a dose of diacodium would do, in short, I will swear, as good royalists did in the civil war, to let my beard grow, till you write. I had rather play at push-pin than read, only to unlearn all my ideas, and be told that King William and Marlborough were no heroes, Russell and Sydney no patriots, Locke and Hoadley no reasoners, Milton, Prior, Garth and Gray no poets; which leaves vacancies for Lord Mansfield and Lord George Germaine to slip into the seats of courage, Wedderburne and Hilsborough into those of patriotism, D. Hume and Johnson into those of solid argument, and all the bellmen of Oxford into those of poetry. As to Lord Chatham, the victories, conquests, extension of our empire within these last

five years will annihilate his fame of course, and he may be replaced by starvation Dundas, whose pious policy suggested that the devil of *rebellion could be expelled only by fasting*, though that never drove him out of Scotland. Unfortunately, Dr. Franklin was a truer politician, when he said he would furnish Mr. Gibbon with materials for writing the History of the Decline of the British Empire, but I doubt he will not pen the character of Hyder Alli with so much complacency as that of Attila.

I have no news for you, as you may perceive by my rehashing these old grievances, but when Chaos is come again, what would signify a courier from Paradise? It adds to my vexation that you cannot or will not come, well I will forget all the world, and though I will learn no creed or jargon of the day, I will find out some pastime that shall not have a grain of sense in it, and yet have much more meaning than any thing in fashion, which will be no difficult task.

Raspe's Book is finished and will be published next week. I do not ask for a letter, but a line to direct me how to send it to you.

A few words more, and I have done for the present. I shall be chagrined to the last degree if I do not see you here this summer, as you promised. I have many things to say to you that I cannot write, and I do not like to delay; I am grown lamentably old; and though my health is much better than last year, the mental part is far from being in the same order. I perceive decays in it every day, and I dread their increasing

till I do not perceive them: this makes me withdraw a good deal from the world, and without any struggle, but I could wish to see more of the few friends I have left, and consequently the one I most admire. It is a sad invitation to tell you that I totter, but I am petitioning your heart, and not your fancy and know I apply to the right office; oh! but there is or may be an obstacle that I do fear: Lord Harcourt is to go to Harrowgate and that journey may detain you in the North! Well! pleasures are not the portion of age! I love you both too well to wish to separate you; and I will be content with your mutual satisfaction if it clashes with mine.

Thursday, 26th.

I have found a parcel of Raspe's books on my table; you shall have one the moment you draw for it.

There is nothing new, for I do not reckon the rhodomontades of the Gazette on Rodney and Arbuthnot novelties, they have not even raised the stocks a fraction.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, May 6, 1781.

I have given Mr. Stonhewer Raspe's book for you. I suppose it will set you on inventing twenty Arts that were known five or six hundred years ago — but I do not believe you will find a Celestinette there, which was

quite your own. There is a picture at the Exhibition in which Stubbs has invented enamelling oil paintings, and it looks as if he would succeed — not that our painters will adopt it. They are as obstinate as mules or farmers. Would they deign to employ the encaustic that Müntz revived in this house?

The Exhibition is much inferior to last year's; nobody shines there but Sir Joshua and Gainsborough. The head of the former's Dido is very fine — I do not admire the rest of the piece. His Lord Richard Cavendish is bold and stronger than he ever coloured. The picture of my three nieces is charming. Gainsborough has two pieces with land and sea, so free and natural that one steps back for fear of being splashed. The back front of the Academy is handsome, but like the other to the street, the members are so heavy that one cannot stand back enough to see it in any proportion, unless in a barge moored in the middle of the Thames.

Darby has relieved Gibraltar: the Spanish fleet ran into their burrows, as if Lord Chatham were still alive. I shall not be surprised if the King of Spain signs a separate peace: what can France say for abandoning him thus: they miss such gross opportunities, that I cannot but think their Ministers take pensions like our Members of Parliament.

There are published two more volumes of Harris of Salisbury — paltry things indeed! He dwells on Aristotle's old hacked rules for the drama and the pedantry of a beginning, middle and end. Harris was one of

those wiseacres whom such wiseacres as himself cried up for profound — but he was more like the skum at the top of a well.

When I was talking of the Academy, I should have told you, that Barretti has printed a catalogue of its ornaments and plaister casts. He takes occasion to inveigh against Brutus for taking off Cæsar — and this Italian slave will be approved by more than Cæsar.

Do you know that I'am in great distress? my Mysterious Mother has wandered into the hands of booksellers, and has been advertised with my name without my knowledge; like a legislator I have held out both rewards and punishments to prevent its appearance, but at last have been forced to advertise it myself — but unless the spurious Edition appears, I shall keep it back till every body is gone out of town, and then it will be forgotten by the winter, I intend too to abuse it myself in a short advertisement prefixed. It is hard that when one submits to be superannuated, it is not permitted; at first I had a mind to add your magic alterations, which in the compass of ten lines makes it excusable — but then I thought it would look like wishing to have it brought on the stage as it might be. If I do publish it I shall like with your leave to print your alterations hereafter, for I think them as I said performed by a *coup de baguette,* and that nothing is a greater proof of your superiority. Pray send me another copy, for in moving from Arlington street to Berkeley square I mislaid them, and cannot find them directly, though I saw them but last year, and have trea-

sured them up so safely, as I did Gray's Candidate, that I don't know where they are.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, May 15, 1781.

I received your last letter on my return from York, where I had been on a committee to meet our delegates. It is not worth while to trouble you with any thing on that subject, nevertheless I cannot help telling you that the meeting was numerous, and respectable; no whit appalled by their ill success and determined to persist in the same constitutional efforts. Their voice will be heard one time or other.

I am really sorry that your Tragedy is likely to be made public in the clandestine way you mention. The booksellers I believe have an opinion that a book once printed, and only given to friends, is in fact published; this the Scotch bookseller Murray declared to be law in his abusive letter to me, and therefore as I believe it is now fourteen years since you printed it, you cannot claim it as property. But hold! why say believe, when I can be sure by looking at the title? Oh! I find you printed it in 1768, so the term is not elapsed, and so my fine argument goes for nothing: however I return where I set out to say that I am sorry, because I really think that on account of one defect which might easily have been rectified, you will find it not only criticised but censured. I distinguish

between these two matters. Criticism, I believe you as well as I can bear with much *sang froid*, but to be censured for having drawn human nature worse than ever it appeared in the world, is what I think neither of us would bear with complacency. And this I fear will be the case, for could the story in general be proved true, the invented circumstance which you have introduced to palliate the Countess's guilt will make the reader recoil more than even the fact itself; I frankly own to you that it had this effect upon me, and therefore it was that I presumed many years ago to send you my sketch of an alteration. You liked it at first, and was afterwards led to reject it by the opinion of a friend, which opinion was formed on an absolute misconception. I own I was sorry for this at the time, and I am more sorry now, not (as I hope you will do me the justice to believe) from any predilection for the little I did, but from strong conviction that something ought to be done in this way to fit it even for the closet. I put the stage totally out of the question, for though very few plays I believe would act finer, could actors be found equal to it, and if the guilt were softened; yet I had not this in my consideration, because you had declared to me your resolution of never bringing it on the stage, and therefore what I did was merely for the sake of having its great merit in point of contrivance, costume, pathos, character, &c., thoroughly allowed by the reader, who I was afraid would find his moral feelings revolt as mine had done from that circumstance, and therefore not give that approbation which was

justly due to the parts, from that one capital blemish in the whole. This it was which induced me to take the liberty I did with you at a time when I could not boast that I had so much of your friendship as I verily believe I have at present, I really then thought it *hazardé*, yet I could not refrain from doing it because I wished that a play of so much merit might be freed from a fault which appeared to me so striking, and which I thought I saw might be done by so slight a remedy, for the alteration so little affects the plot and characters, that it does not even affect Lady Di's drawings: if it did I know you would reject it without mercy, for I firmly believe you value them more than the work they belong to, but this is a digression.

After teazing you so long on this subject I will only add that I have two copies of the tragedy, one given me by you, the other left me by Mr. Gray, in one of these I have inserted my alterations, which I will bring up with me the latter end of June, for I really meditate a visit to you as soon as my Diocesan has executed his Visitation; here the two words are precisely used as they are in Soame Jenyns's World, but be not afraid, my visit will only be a *bis*, for I shall have a hundred others to make in the month which I allot for this southern expedition, in August; I'am tied neck and heels to my York residence.

I have but just now received Raspe's book, many thanks to you for it, from what I have seen I think it very curious, the other book in defence of Milton against Johnson (which I believe also comes from you)

is only a republication of what was published in the Memoirs of Hollis.

Believe me, dear Sir,
most faithfully yours
W. M.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

May 22, 1781.

I am pleased that you think seriously of making me a visit soon, but you might have retrenched the comfort you hold out of its being a very short one. As you come as seldom as a comet, I should not have been alarmed, if you intended to stay as long. My publication shall certainly not precede your arrival. I can scarce even call that delay a compliment, having already suspended its appearance. In short my advertisement prevented the spurious editions, and I flatter myself I am forgotten, at least I have gained time, and at worst will publish in July or August, when all the world is dispersed, and I can trust the fickleness of the age for not recollecting in winter what passed after the prodigious interval of three months. Should any national calamity happen, no incredible event, I will turn the ill wind to private good, and steal out, while the consternation lasts.

Your objection to the play, I allow to be fully just, and I know fifty others, but don't imagine I will correct any thing, no, that would show predilection and par-

tiality to it; partiality I have, but it is to your corrections, and it shall have none other, I have said the truth: I think your alterations marvellous, and it is favourable to the tragedy, that it could produce your alterations and Lady Di's drawings, you shall have the full honours of yours, for first or last they shall stand by themselves in your name. I have no jealousy, I allow your full superiority, and will always avow it, and have more pleasure in the fame of my friends than appetite for it myself. As to the Mysterious Mother being acted I am perfectly secure, at least while Lord Hertford is Lord Chamberlain, nay, whoever should succeed him I think would not license it without my consent; but enough on a subject of which I am sick and weary, and yet I have nothing to replace it.

It was not from me, I assure you that you have received any defence of Milton, nor do I know any thing of it, but what you tell me, that it is in the Memoirs of Hollis. Boswell that quintessence of busy bodies, called on me last week, and was let in, which he should not have been, could I have foreseen it. After tapping many topics to which I made as dry answers as an unbribed oracle he vented his errand — "had I seen Dr. Johnson's Lives of the Poets:" I said slightly no, not yet, and so overlaid his whole impertinence—as soon as he could recover himself, with Caledonian sincerity, he talked of Macklin's new play, and pretended to like it, which would almost make one suspect that he knows a dose of poison has already been administered; though by the way I hear there is little good

in the piece, except the likeness of Sir Pertinax to twenty thousand Scots.

You will find that I have gotten a new Idol, in a word, a successor to Rosette and almost as great a favourite, nor is this a breach of vows and constancy, but an act of piety. In a word, my poor dear old friend Madame du Deffand had a little dog of which she was extremely fond, and the last time I saw her she made me promise if I should survive her to take charge of it. I did. It is arrived and I was going to say, it is incredible how fond I am of it, but I have no occasion to brag of my dogmanity. I dined at Richmond House t'other day, and mentioning whither I was going, the Duke said, "own the truth, shall not you call at home first and see Tonton," he guessed rightly. He is now sitting on my paper as I write; — not the Duke, but Tonton.

I know no public matters but what the newspapers tell you as well as me. Darby is come home, but Gibraltar is in a manner destroyed by the Spanish bombs. The Dutch Fleet is hovering about, but it is a pickpocket war and not a martial one, and I never attend to petty larceny. Adieu!

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, June 14, 1781.

You may imagine perhaps that because I am within reach of the dust of Hyde Park, and of the dirt of

Westminster I might send you letters brim-full of news every week. I scorn your supposes. I am as ignorant as truth itself of any thing worth telling you, the newspapers like scavengers, collect all the ordures of Parliament, and retail them to dung the country, and you may have them like other chapmen. What can I tell you? That Lord Cornwallis has conquered his troops out of shoes and provisions, and himself out of troops: or that the heroic Governor Johnstone was so enraged at Captain Sutton's cowardice that he waited three hours to let him recover his spirit, and so lost the French Fleet? pray excuse my being the historian of such prowess, I should as soon admire Mr. Cumberland's *successful* negotiations in Spain, where he staid begging peace till Gibraltar was battered to the ground. I hope he will write an ode himself on the treaty he did not make, and like Pindar fill it with the genealogy of the mule on which he ambled from the Prado to the Escurial, and when I am a mule I will read it.

I have been reading another courtier's book, Sir Richard Worseley's History of the Isle of Wight. It is dedicated to the King, and to himself too, for I see no reason for his writing it, but to call himself *right honourable*, and to celebrate his family, and indeed they have made a great figure there; one of them having been commissioned to search for Queen Elizabeth's Hawks, which, however, it does not appear that he found, or I suppose he would have been made *Right Honourable* too.

I have been rather more entertained by an Essay on Hunting by a Mr. Beckford, who puts me in mind of the Country Squire who was hunting as the battle of Edge-hill was going to be fought; an instance of philosophic indifference in the height of a civil war, unparalleled till the present age. Pray do not imagine that I think anecdotes of painting a jot more patriotic than anecdotes on hunting, if Mr. Beckford is of my opinion he holds it in vain to say a serious word to the present generation. I came hither on Saturday for the summer, and you will find me as idle and trifling as if the last gazette had announced the victory of Ramillies, in short an Englishman after Lord Mansfield's own heart, and insensible to my country's ruin. Adieu.

P.S. I direct this to Aston, though I am not sure but you may be *concioning ad Clerum* at York.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, July 3, 1781.

It would be very dissonant, from my impatience to see you, if I had suffered any thing to interfere with my readiness to receive you the moment you are ready to come to me. You will find me alone from this instant to your arrival, and for as long afterwards as you will stay with me — yes, quite alone, unless you persuade Mr. Stonhewer to accompany you, which would make me still happier.

I have found your emendations of the Mysterious Mother, but as to inserting them in the text it is now impossible, for the whole impression was printed off in a week after it was delivered to Dodsley. As I then thought I should scarce be able to get the start of the spurious edition; luckily my advertisement stopped that, which shows it was an interested job, and perhaps I may be able to avoid publishing at all; if I must, I shall certainly beg your leave to add your emendations. I told you at first most sincerely that I think they are as full proof of your genius as you ever gave, and I shall not selfishly stifle them to avoid severity to myself. My play has been already so public, that I can never totally suppress it; it is said to be printing in Ireland; nay, I think it will be more to my honour to adopt your corrections than not, as to own one's errors is some merit, — but enough of this.

I wrote my letter last night and had sealed it, but open it again to tell you that if you should be arrived by Friday, and ready to come to me, you would find some company that day who propose to dine with me, of which I received notice this morning. I give you this notice that you might not think I deceived you. Do send me a line before hand when I shall see you, that I may not even be engaged to dine out.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 16, 1781.

Don't you think in the case of correspondence that it is worse to adhere to the letter of a promise than to break it. You desired me to write to you, but you certainly did not wish I should, if I had nothing to say, yet I keep my word most conscientiously, lest you should think me negligent, though I have not a tittle to tell you. I have heard nothing public or private, but of the ball at Windsor on the Prince's birthday, and I trust you do not care a straw about that, any more than I do. The Monarch and his son sail to the Nore to day to see Parker's fleet, and I suppose that Parker's fleet may see them, and what then? — I protest my imagination cannot suggest a single reflection on such events; I might as well tell you what I had for dinner, what indeed does the present vast scene speak but that four or five great Nations may be at immense expense and be a prodigious while doing nothing? — yes, and that one of those Nations at least can amuse itself in the meantime with the details of a hop, and the circumstances of a scuffle,—don't tell me, the world is grown an old fool, and the Memoirs of P. P. will be as important as the History of the present age. If I did any thing myself, I should think it as much worth sending you as the Journal of Europe — but alas! like other Sovereigns, and consequently like Harlequin when he sat on a throne and was asked,

que fais tu là, Harlequin, I answer, *mais je regne.* At most, by my *de par le Roi,* I have printed Mr. Jones's ode, and have a painter making drawings for the description of my house and collection — and with my own royal hand I have been preparing a new Edition of my Painters —

These are imperial Works and worthy Kings.

If you say no, tell me what they do better, oh! but the Emperor, why he is running about and sowing sayings, that are to be cited by Diderot and D'Alembert — however I am mistaken if he turns out any thing but an ape of the King of Prussia.

I have received from Brightelmstone a long card in verse, from Mr. Hayley to Mr. Gibbon, inviting Livy to dine with Virgil — but it is not worth sending you — nor do I know any thing that is, if you do, good now, send it to me.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 9, 1781.

The dead calm, which occasioned such a paucity of my letter seems to be thoroughly at an end, for some time. It was but a *grim repose.* Gibraltar is besieged, Minorca besieged, New York I believe, besieged — and I am sure Great Britain is besieged. Forty-seven or nine French and Spanish ships of the line at the gates of the Channel, and Admiral Darby with only twenty-two in Torbay, is a blockade to some purpose. The

wind however has ruffled the trenches of the latter, and driven them from their station, and they have also lost a 74-gun ship. But unless this warning reminds them of the approaching equinox, it is probable that they will return to their post for another fortnight. This is the prevalent opinion; I do not tell you that it is mine, for I have none. I have long found that I do not shine at conjectures. I have guessed right about nothing but that the storm would come at last. I shall go on to tell you what others think, or say they do. It is supposed that the Jamaica fleet, worth four millions, is the immediate object — and no trifling one! some think an attempt will be made to burn the stores at Cork, what should hinder? or other attacks on the Coast! If I divined intentions, it would be that France is willing to put an end to their own expense in the war, and after exhausting us so long, will force the most unopening eyes in the universe to give up the frantic vision of recovering America, I am sure we must if we would save any thing.

This is the sum total of what I can learn; matter enough to dissert upon if such were my propensity! but besides not loving talkation, it is painful to me to write. A finger of my right hand has opened with an explosion of chalk Stones; five have come out, and it is still big with another, I have nobody to dictate to, for my Printer Secretary is gone into Warwickshire.

I have received your fourth book, and give you many thanks, you may receive as many more for your Fresnoy whenever you please, and ten thousand more

for any thing I have *not* seen — I am not afraid of giving YOU *carte blanche* for any bill you will draw on me.

Though this is but my second letter, remember it is twice as many as I have received from you — and you have not a lame finger. With the dowager life I lead, it is marvellous that I can write any thing but tittle tattle and scandal, but happily, as my memory is on the wane, I remember nothing of that sort. It is true I perceive more serious flaws, but is it lamentable to decay, when one has survived the glory of one's country? My wishes are limited now to peace — I care not what sort of peace — the longer it is deferred, the worse it must be; only boyish gamesters flatter themselves, that a good run can retrieve a fortune that is lost, and only idiot gamesters believe in luck against calculation — gamesters we are: distress and disgrace have had no effect, we play on against those who have shown they will risk nothing. Is this credible of a whole nation? you perhaps still think that a whole nation may be corrected. I do not. Burn their cards and dice, and perhaps when they are cool they may come to their senses — at least their children whom they will leave beggars will think of earning an honest livelihood — however, those are speculations for those who amuse themselves with peeping into futurity. I have almost done with time, and only sigh for a few hours of tranquillity.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

DEAR SIR, York, Sept. 19, 1781.

I am always an epistolary culprit and shall be I fear to the end of the chapter, nevertheless I can now plead some excuse, for ever since I have been here I have been in a perpetual hurry and bustle. Harcourts, Holdernesses, and Conyers for visitors of quality, and of gentry myriads besides. This added to Cathedral business, Justice of Peace business, &c. has kept me in a continual ferment. Yet in the midst of this I found time to write and to preach a sermon, which would have frightened you had you heard it, you may guess what it was about by its text,—viz. "Yet Michael the Archangel when disputing with the Devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said the Lord rebuke thee." Miss Fouquier who heard me as well Lord Harcourt, gave me high commendations and indeed I have the vanity to say that it wanted nothing but her exterminating eye to make it all it should be. What will be the consequences I cannot yet guess, but I suspect the convocation will be summoned to meet upon it. In the mean time like the nation with the combined fleet at the Chops of the Channel, I remain (as you say) in a grim sort of repose, till our first rate ecclesiastical man of war returns from his northward visitatorial cruize: and then I know not whether he will give me a broadside

or no. If he does, it may afford me matter for a longer letter.

Lord Harcourt I fancy has by this time got home and I hope received benefit from his Harrowgate expedition, though he is not yet certain about it. He expects you at Nuneham and I hope you will not frustrate his expectation. Pray tell me in your next whether Sir Joshua Reynolds be returned from Flanders, for I want to write to him. If I were to beat my brains to pieces I cannot find at present more to say than that I am

yours very heartily

W. M.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 25, 1781.

I did guess that you was combatting the evil one and had no time to answer idle letters. Nay, but I am glad that you have erected altar against altar and attacked the Priest of Baal in his own high places. Still I hope you will find a moment to pay your *lay*-debts too, especially as posterity will call on you for that liquidation, which said posterity will certainly never hear of your Metropolitan's Charge to his Clergy; and which he had better have given in bad Latin like Bishop Butler's Concio ad Clerum; and then neither the dead Romans nor his own Westminster Scholars would have understood it. Soame Jennyn's Ode on Odes, and Johnson's Life of Gray are still unchastised.

Apropos have you seen the Doctor's character of Warburton in his Life of Addison? it is ten times more like to himself than to the Bishop, and expressed in the same uncouth phrases which he satirizes.

Yes, be assured I shall go to Nuneham: I wait for my summons, and delay my visit to Park Place on that account that I may kill two journies with one stone; for I grow very thrifty of my travels as I advance in years, and do not like to waste unnecessary hours on the road.

I know no more news than if it was my duty to have intelligence. I heard a Minister t'other night joking on the Equinoxial winds which would send the Combined Fleets packing, how *comical*? I mean their being here. Neptune they say is to have a pension like Lord Dunmore for having lost his government. There is a new Epigram that came to my hand t'other day:—

> O England, no wonder your troubles begin
> When blockaded without and *block-headed* within.

I cannot resolve you whether Sir Joshua Reynolds is returned or not. Is your Fresnoy to remain in embrio till he writes notes on it? and how does it want notes? I met with a thought of Voltaire t'other day that pleased me, though not at all to the purpose of what I was saying. He is declaring against the possibility of translating poets, and asks whether *Music can be translated?* Your Fresnoy is no exception, for you have translated his prosaic verses into

poetry. I wish you do not translate his Grace of York to Canterbury! Atterbury said in his controversy with Wake, "many a man has been written out of character into preferment." It is the sort of martyrdom that great Churchmen do not wince at. Adieu!

P.S. I desire to see your sermon.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

DEAR SIR, York, Oct. 1, 1781.

I send you the enclosed very hastily scribbled, which I shall be very much obliged to you if you will correct and get fairly transcribed, and afterwards sent as soon as may be to Mr J. Stockdale, Bookseller, in Piccadilly, by the penny post. I would wish it to appear in the London Courant as soon as possible; I would not give you this trouble were there anybody in town that I could apply to at present, but as you are yourself my old friend at the *Smyrna*, I hope you will not fail me;

Yours &c.

Add this postcript,

For greater certainty it may be well to mention his graces text, 2 Corinth. 10 Chap. 5 verse. "Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God."

Pray stop it carefully.

TO THE PRINTER OF THE LONDON COURANT.

MR. PRINTER, Grantham, Oct. 1, 1781.

In my way from a tour to the lakes I stopt at York to take a view of its magnificent cathedral, which indeed more than answered the superb accounts I had heard of its structure. It was last Saturday in the afternoon, and having heard from the verger who attended me that the Archbishop was to preach the next day from his throne, I was induced to stay another morning to be present at the ceremony.

This custom of preaching from the throne it seems has been introduced by the present metropolitan, all his predecessors having delivered their discourses from the common pulpit, in doing which, though they might perhaps do a favour to the ears of their audience, they certainly did not consult their own dignity, for a throne and an Archbishop seems to be so strictly united in what one may almost call the nature of things, that they ought never to be put asunder; but this only by the way. As to myself, a stranger, and in my boots and surtout, I made no scruple of mingling with the herd of his auditors and stood so near the said throne that I lost not a syllable of the discourse. It was delivered with all that dignity which results from slow and solemn recitation, and its subject the government of the passions; it is not my purpose to analize the whole, I only shall mention one single sentence, and that for a reason which I shall after give you.

Speaking of the ill effects of ambition, or as his Grace phrased it, of a desire of pre-eminence he laid it to the charge of the highest ranks "that they wasted God's creation and spilt the blood of millions, and that merely for a name, which yet they did not always attain."—Now, I recollect that some Sunday in the course of last spring, calling in at the Smyrna coffee house, I met an old friend (now gone abroad) who told me that he was just come from St. James' Chapel, where he had heard a sermon preached by this same Archbishop on the same subject; he moreover quoted the passage above in nearly the same words. This therefore made me prick up my ears in expectation of another passage about charioteering, which my friend had also quoted to me from the same discourse, but here I was disappointed, and as that sentence was now omitted I began to doubt concerning its identity. This doubt still remains with me, and therefore as I cannot have early satisfaction from my absent friend, I write to you Mr. Printer, hoping that if you will please to insert this letter, some person who heard the sermon at Court will be kind enough to tell me whether I was right or wrong in my first surmise.

I remember the gentleman at the Smyrna, who is a deeper politician than I am, seemed to think that in the two instances of Ambition and Charioteering more was meant than met the ear, and that his Grace disliked the American war almost as much as he did High Phaetons, which (though I did not agree with him at the time) I now suspect to be the case: for as he retained the one

instance and expunged the other, it now seemed as if he thought the former even the worst of the two; in which sentiment I certainly have the honour to agree with him. I know it may be said that as there are no young and royal charioteers in or about York, that instance was not for his purpose and was therefore omitted. But then let me ask who is there in or about York that have willingly been instrumental in wasting God's creation and spilling the blood of Millions? In short, Mr. Printer, I am in a puzzle about the matter and only know this, that if his Grace still thinks with his brethren of the upper house of Convocation, that the American war is a just and necessary war, it was rather impolitic in him to introduce a sentence into this sermon which might tend to make his Yorkshire audience doubt about his sentiments; especially when he knows that there are at least six thousand in the County who are firmly of an opinion that God's creation has been wasted and that the blood of millions has been spilt, for a nominal pre-eminence on that Continent which is neither attained nor likely ever to be attained. But if on the other hand the great Prelate is convinced that the said War is unjust and unnecessary, then I dare say the said six thousand will be proud to put his name at the head of their Association, as being firmly persuaded that whoever has the spirit to tell our rulers such a truth and the eloquence to convince them of it, will, by putting an end to this cursed Contention deserve a civic wreath which though seldom seen there, would be a very becoming additional ornament to a mitre.

A Traveller.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Oct. 9, 1781.

I shall do what you desired to-morrow, it was impossible sooner. This is the substance of my letter: the rest will be garnish; for though I have been robbed on the highway, I should not have thought it important enough for a dispatch on purpose. Lady Browne and I going to the Duchess of Montrose here at Twickenham Park on Thursday night, as we often do, were robbed by a single horseman within few yards of the Park-gate. She lost a trifle, and I nine guineas; but I had the presence of mind before I let down the glass to take out my watch and put it within my waistcoat under my arm. The gentleman, for so I believe he was, declared himself much obliged, pulled off his hat, wished us good night, and I suppose will soon have leave to raise a regiment.

I go to Park-place the day after to-morrow, but think I shall not proceed to Nuneham. I have not heard from Lord Harcourt, but Mr. Stonhewer called here a few days ago and says the house is pulled to pieces, and consequently in great disorder, which I conclude is the reason of my not being summoned.

All the papers say Lord Richard Cavendish is dead, I was scarce acquainted with him, nor ever heard any thing but good of him. My not knowing yet whether his death is true, shows you what an awkward angle we live in, and how little we hear, we are forced to

be robbed now and then at our own doors, that we may have a paragraph that we can call our own. Adieu.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 7, 1781.

If great countries ever owned a defeat or Gazettes ever spoke truth, you would conclude by that of last night that the Royalists in America have had shining and solid success under a person formerly called, one Arnold, but who has plainly shown himself two Arnolds. This Gazette has been gleaned and new boiled from amidst a heap of disasters that were brought over on Saturday by Colonel Conway express from Sir Henry Clinton, and which have transpired from other letters, or from the soap-boilers themselves. Two regiments even of the victorious expedition under double Arnold have been cut to pieces by the Americans,— the latter, you know never fight.

The Town says from various letters which came over on Saturday too, but not one of which to be sure the Gazette has seen, that Lord Cornwallis is in a most desperate position, and had provisions but for a month, that we have lost two or three frigates, that the French have landed some thousand men, have been joined by eight men of war, of the line, and are superior to our Fleet by eleven or twelve ships. The Stocks who have

not such command of countenance as the Gazette are low spirited.

This is all the hearsay I know. I came to town this morning to attend the Rehearsal of Mr. Jephson's Play, but I do not write Prologue or Epilogue as the newspapers say; and shall return to Strawberry on Saturday.

I hope your commission was executed to your satisfaction. It was not my fault that it was not performed immediately.

When will your residence end? when do you return to your flocks two legged or four legged? and when shall you leave them and come southward.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

York, Nov. 9, 1781.

I am as usual an Epistolary culprit or rather in a state of insolvency; and you I suppose will have no literary dealings with me till you cannot help it, that is till some more important news from America than Arnold's depredations makes you write whether you will or no, in the meantime having got a sort of a subject for a letter I shall employ this paper upon it.

A few days ago a Clergyman in this neighbourhood who is in a state of real insolvency and who I believe brought himself into it by his own great imprudence, sent me by my Printer a black letter Chaucer of the first edition, and an original picture of the poet Dray-

ton, for the book he asked one guinea, for the picture five; as I make no curious collections, either of books or of pictures, neither of these offers were accepted by me, as charity was out of the case, for his debts are too large and his imprudence too great to make him an object of it; he has *de quoi vivre*, and added thousands would only make him more improvident, this I only speak from the character I have heard of him, for he is not of my acquaintance.

However as the Picture is certainly an original I think it worth while to describe it to you, as you may perhaps be either willing to purchase it, or to mention it to some of your friends.

It is on board, about the Holbein size of a head, that is something less than life, the drapery black with a cloak on the left shoulder, a broad ruff, and a laurel crown, the date, Ætat. suæ 36 anno 1599, which on consulting Grainger, I found answered exactly to his time of life, though not to the date of his print which was taken from a picture drawn when he was older; it is a sensible countenance and in good drawing, but with little shadow consequently flat though highly finished; it is in good preservation except a blister or two on the nose, which Beckwith our picture cleaner here says he could easily cure. He offers to repair the whole for half a guinea and as he is not only a very good picture cleaner but also a great antiquarian, I am certain he would execute his task *con amore*, or rather with all the care and faithful solicitude of Antiquarianility, which as it is a word of my own coining and has before had your

approbation I hope I may use without being accused of tautology. If this account of the picture induces you or any of your acquaintance to become its purchaser, I shall take care that it be sent to you with all possible punctuality, for I have a sort of veneration for the old laureate, though rather for Selden's sake then his own, because I remember that the lawyer's notes on his Poliolbion, helped me to much record erudition concerning Druidism, when I was writing Caractacus.

I have (God be thanked) got one quarter's residence almost over, and begin another next Sunday, if I get well through it, I shall then be my own man for a year and three quarters. In hopes of hearing from you soon I slumber in my stall and with a very dignified yawn conclude myself very faithfully

and respectfully yours

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Nov. 13, 1781.

I try to answer your letter though my hand shakes; so it is very difficult. I have had the gout in my right these three months, the fourth finger has discharged a shower of chalk stones which makes me as a genealogist, no otherwise I protest to your priesthood, conclude that I am descended from Deucalion rather than Adam, unless there has been any intermarriage between the two families. A new swelling has come within

this week and must be lanced soon, and being very nervous too, any effort in writing makes my hand reel more, but I must thank you for your *Primierà* about the picture of Drayton, though I do not chuse to purchase it; I have no room to stick a single head; I am poor too, and I am grown so old that every acquisition seems much dearer to me from the little time I have to enjoy it. Shall I own farther; I do not think all Drayton ever wrote worth five guineas; Dr. Johnson perhaps may have installed him in Milton's throne, and the age may have sworn fealty to him, but I am a Tory and adhere to the right line, and will not abjure those I learnt to revere in my nursery, nor will kneel to stocks and stones that the mob are taught to idolize.

I am too, though a Goth so modern a Goth that I hate the black letter, and I love Chaucer better in Dryden and Baskerville, than in his own language and dress, still my antiquarianility is much obliged to your pimping for it, but the anility-half predominates and will not pay for such a spark as Drayton who is neither young nor vigorous.

Though very unfit for anything at present, and when I say at *present* do not imagine I expect to grow fitter for any thing; I am occupied about Mr. Jephson's play, have been at one rehearsal, and must if I can be at another on Friday; the players I believe thought I was come to act the ghost of the miscarriage in the What d'ye call it, perhaps it may prove so by venturing with the gout into a cold theatre, and then I shall say to them with propriety "I owe my death to you! to you!

to you!" I could entertain you, were my hand able with the history of my negociations with Mr. Harris, Miss Young, and how all my finesse was nearly *deroutée* by an Irish head, but I am tired and must wish you good night.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 26, 1781, late at night.

I came to town to day at two o'clock and found the town in a hubbub on the news of Lord Cornwallis and his whole army being made prisoners, but the speech and two majorities to morrow will send them all easy again to the opera by night.

I cannot tell you a word more of this mishap than Mr. Stonhewer has told you, whom I met this evening at Lady Cecilia's, and who has written to you. Mr. Macpherson who publishes our daily creed, has been proclaiming that Lord Cornwallis had vowed he would never pile up his arms like Burgoyne. I do not know whether this was to keep up our spirits or not, but it puts the hero in a ridiculous light, which is the way in which heroes are treated of late when they can be no longer of use, it saves rewards.

I have heard nothing else, nor was this repetition worth sending, but it proves I am not negligent.

I have been plagued about Mr. Jephson's play—nay I am so still, for though I did prevail on Mr. Harris to act it, who had been ill used about it, and on Miss

Young to play the mother which she has done to admiration — and though it has succeeded perfectly, the author is dissatisfied. I had four sides last week, and to night another letter of eight pages to scold me for letting the statue on the tomb be cumbent instead of erect, in short I do not wonder he is a poet for he is distracted — he shall act his next play himself for me.

When you come to town I can shew you a thousand curious things, from Mad. du Deffand's papers, but I believe I did mention them before, — when one repeats oneself, it is plain one grows old or has nothing to say.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Nov. 28, 1781.

You may be unused to horrors, yet if you have read the 10th Article of Lord Cornwallis's capitulation, your feelings will bleed afresh, he capitulates for his own person and return, he capitulates for his garrison — but lest the loyal Americans who had followed him should be included in that indemnity, he demands that they should not be *punished* — is refused — and leaves them to be hanged! now his burning towns, &c., becomes a mere wantonness of war — they were the towns of those whom he calls rebels, though he was one of five who protested against the Stamp-act — but these were his friends, his fellow soldiers! could I fill

three pages more with news, I would not — what article could deserve to be coupled with so abominable a deed.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

York, Dec. 16, 1781.

I omitted one topic for a letter till it was out of date, I should have congratulated you on the success of your son Jephson's tragedy to which filiation you had certainly as good a claim as Homer had to either of his dramatic bantlings Sophocles and Euripides, but while I was framing a fine period for the purpose, a letter from you stops me, by telling me that he is in his lunes; however I have a topic on my table which shall not be lost, comprised in two octavo volumes, which might I think justly be entitled Learning in its Lunes, or the Etymologist run mad. I never in my days saw such a farrago of inconclusive quotation. You I suppose will wonder that I have read it and reserving yourself for that huger phænomenon of antiquarianility which is shortly to obfuscate the litterary hemisphere, will say proudly as Bishop Dawes did to a lady who asked him if he had seen a late eclipse of the moon; "No madam, but my chaplain did; I saw the eclipse of the sun." I however have paid due attention to this forerunner of dulness, and with pen in hand have marginally noted him almost throughout, and if I live to finish the work am not without my hopes that my copy may one day

stand on the same shelf with some of the like scribblings of yours and Gray's pen inserted on the margin of some such like author; a prophecy of my own full as likely to come to pass as that of Pope's, who predicted that Bolinbroke's metaphysics would be placed cheek by jowl between Locke and Malbranche.

As to your political *notitiæ* with which you sometimes favour me, I can only thank you for them; I can send you nothing in return, for what signifies telling you that our county is tending towards a meeting, as some of the southern counties are doing; what good will all the county meetings of all England do against that decided spirit of national ruin which now so successfully operates in all our councils? all is over, completely over; so if you wont read Mr. Bryant, read the Dean of Exeter; pick their musty straws of learning, and try to kill time and drive away thought, 'tis the best receipt I can give you or myself, except large draughts of Brunswick mum, strong beer, or metheglin; so no more at present from

Your hopeless servant

W. M.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Dec. 20, 1781.

I should not have waited for your sending me a topic if I had had any thing entertaining or comfortable to tell you. Who would not be worn out by repetition of disgraces, follies, obstinacy and profligate

corruption? when tools are converted into heroes, or blunt tools are blamed for the awkwardness of the artificer, are these novelties worthy of detail! I am weary of writing such a series of paltry circumstances. The crisis of our total ruin comes on with larger strides, and it seems as if it would arrive without any convulsions of the patient. As to county meetings, I will say nothing on them for several reasons that you know. Managed as they have been, I think they will but sub-divide our calamities and our disunion, and heal neither. I have a more recent reason that I will not tell you till I see you. In truth it were idle to make objections when they, and I fear every thing else is too late. The nation is both insensible and senseless: nor misfortunes, nor dishonour, nor danger can alarm or make it feel. I thought they would: I have been mistaken. I may be so again when I repeat what I have often said, that if ever we do awake the *réveil* will be terrible; for they who have voluntary been fools, will pretend they have been dupes (which is not true, as the artifices employed were too shallow) and then being angry, they will enrage themselves to prove that for once they are in the right, they will do an infinite deal of mischief in the wrong place; and then out of repentance as much the contrary way. That some others expect a storm is evident, for a few of the most shameless instigators of the American War, are now the loudest against it, and call that apostacy, conviction, though it is solely dictated by the hope of saving their places on a change. The readiest flatterers will always be the first

renegades. I dare to say that the soldier who spit in the face of Charles I. as he went to his trial, had some years before been the most noisy and officious when on guard at the gate of Whitehall; but such squabbles are nothing to me, and they who have drugged the bowl must drink the dregs.

I have looked into Mr. Bryant and dipped here and and there into Dr. Milles, but without cutting the leaves of the latter. From him one can expect nothing. From the former I did expect ingenuity, but he seems to have neither taste nor ear, and which is stranger, to reason poorly. I have only skimmed his second volume. I cannot wade into all that mass of old English, and bad authors. Any man may convince me if he will but write enough and dully enough, for I had rather believe than read. Both the Dean and Bryant I could see have inverted Chatterton's character, have erected him into a lad of high and haughty honour but deny his wonderful parts. Bryant quotes here and there a wretched distich to prove his hypothesis, and then from some of our miserable old rhymers selects here and there a tolerable couplet. He now controverts the supposition of a third personage, though as I told you last year he himself had chosen that plea; and yet he again gives some of the MSS. to one Turgot, but for a specimen of his logic, see what he says of Gray's beautiful stanza where he evidently mistakes the sense of the words themselves and their context:—

Hands that the reins of Empire *might* have swayed.

Yet what were they says Bryant, but Ploughmen and Labourers? so says Gray; but does not the word *might* imply that had they had education, they might have been Cromwells! but I am as weary of that controversy, as if it were a political one. There is a curious pamphlet worth your looking into, a letter to Jenkinson; it has made some gross blunders, but goes more to the real point than any thing I have seen. Read particularly p. 41, where much is stated in a small compass.

I asked Sir Joshua t'other night if he had done any thing towards your notes; he said no, but he had some ideas in his head, though at present he was busy on arranging his own notes taken in Flanders. I do not want either, but I do want your poem published. Adieu! will you not come this winter?

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Jan. 3, 1782.

I have seen an Ode to Hope by the Duchess of Devonshire and Hope's Answer. The first is easy, and prettily expressed, though it does not express much. The second is the genteelest sermon I ever saw and by much the best-natured, and the expression charming. The conclusive lines are admirable and the first time I believe that a compliment to a fine Lady conveyed a most grave lesson of morality, yet so delicately that it might be read at a ball without shocking a fine

gentleman. It is precisely the reverse of *not mentioning hell to ears polite.* Nay though flattery and poetry, it might be pronounced in the pulpit, all this is such a novelty that I wish for a copy of both, *s'entend,* as the first founds one part of the merit of the second.

I was refreshed by this sight after being stupified by Dr. Milles' waggon-load of notes on Rowley, which I have at last been reading. They have all the dull impertinence of a Dutch Commentary, an ostentatious parade of all he knows, to the purpose or not, accompanied with bombast preferences of Rowley to Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Homer, Virgil, &c. &c. I am suffocated, pray let *Hope* give me some comfort. I know nothing else, the war, and the French Fleet and the West Indies, and Lord Sandwich, and Lord Cornwallis, are all gone out of town I believe for the holidays.

There is a nightingale-woman I am told, called the Allegranti, who sings so sweetly that Lady Mary Duncan and Lady Mount-Edgecumbe turn their backs when she warbles, because you know people only hear with their faces and nothing is fit to be heard but Pacchieroti. As I have no ear but in my eyes I shall go to see this Philomel.

Pray write to me for I have nothing to do, and nothing to say: I can still answer letters or questions, but I find I cannot answer them if they are not written or asked: my goose-quill is grown very grey.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Jan. 10. 1782.

I am forced to write to you with Kirgate's pen, for though my right hand is better, the left is totally useless and muffled to above the elbow with my old biennial visitor the gout. As he had out-staid his term I was in hopes that, like prelatic visitors, he would relax and relax till he totally forgot me: however, by being dilatory in his returns, I may upon the whole baulk him of one progress.

I do not at all believe that there was a grain of partiality in my approbation of your Ode: ask the other Princes of Parnassus, if I am apt to flatter them more than I do other Highnesses. I shall certainly demand a copy from you, if I cannot get one otherwise, which I don't imagine will be difficult. Lady Jersey gave both Odes to Mrs. Delany; and though I may see neither of them this month from my confinement, Lord and Lady Harcourt will be in town to night and to them I shall apply.

It will be no compliment to cede to you Dean Milles's huge book: I have not touched it this week, nor waded through the last hundred pages; you will find that I have scribbled a few short notes here and there in the margin, therefore, don't let it go out of your own hands: but I am in no hurry for it, nor shall probably ever make use of them. Much less will I publish my own pamphlet, which might oblige me to

say more; if you will, I am sure I shall be diverted; but as to curing the world of foolish credulity — nothing but a new deluge could effect it, and that for no long period. Nay, would one flap fools and leave the knaves in quiet? however, on some vigil of your nobler anger you may kill flies if you please.

I will send the book to the coach to-morrow, therefore, you will enquire for it about the time of its arrival.

Mrs. Delany has lent me another most pleasing work of Mr. Gilpin, his Essay on Forest Trees considered in a picturesque light. It is perfectly new, truly ingenious, full of good sense in an agreeable style, and void of all affectation — sad recommendations to such times! consequently I suppose it will not be published. Adieu! I am in pain and tired.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 7, 1782.

I expected that you would at least acknowledge the receipt of Dr. Milles; I can tell you that if you will not stir a finger to encourage me, mine grow so very helpless that they will soon resign their pen like more puissant secretaries, and a little more willingly. This fit of mine was very short, not a whole month — what care you? but it has left such weakness and so many chalk eggs that my sufferings are far from eased. The Dean and Mr. Bryant are not received with such

implicit deference as I concluded they would meet. Many pens are whetting. A Mr. Malone has published some strong criticisms on them, but unluckily has attempted humour which is not an antiquary's weapon.

Well! after a fortnight's suspence it is certain that Lord George Germaine is to resign and to be a Viscount. Don't imagine that *otium cum dignitate* was his own choice, still less his master's; and still less is that a sacrifice to a ruined nation. No, it is a mere cabal, an effort of a faction, whose fears first dictated it. During the recess the Lord Advocate wrote to Lord North that he could not serve any longer with Lord George, and the letter was delivered not unwillingly. The writer hoped to succeed the proscribed. The letter was exceedingly ill received, and Lord George was much pressed to remain; nay, this day sevennight the Lord Advocate was not spoken to; however as mighty Emperors must submit now and then to their Janisaries, *starvation* himself is rewarded for this closet insurrection with the place of treasurer of the Navy (£6000 per year) in the room of old Ellis, *(ready for all posts)* who is made Secretary of State for late America. Dr. Warton will wish himself joy, who in his new volume on Pope had just said that the poet would be happy if he knew that his pleasant villa is occupied by a *man of such virtue, learning, and taste.* I should think not, if one may judge of what he said on much such another transfer of property, —

> And Helmsley, once proud Buckingham's delight,
> Slides to a Scrivener, or a City Knight.

It is very diverting to hear how the courtiers *now* rail at Lord George as if this was the moment of his greatest criminality! — in short, the treachery and the rewards both to the traitor and to the betrayed are of a piece, and constitute no new æra.

Any thing is preferable to such politics; I am sure two good stories are: here they are. T'other night at Brooks' the conversation turned on Lord Falkland; Fitzpatrick said he was a very weak man and owed his fame to Lord Clarendon's partiality. Charles Fox was sitting in a deep reverie, with his knife in his hand. "There," continued Fitzpatrick, "I might describe Charles meditating on his ruin of his country, ingeminating the words, peace! peace! and ready to plunge the knife in his own bosom." — "Yes," rejoined Hare in the same ironic dolorous tone, "and he would have done so, but happening to look on the handle of the knife, he saw it was silver, and put it in his pocket." The other is an anecdote more fit to rank with the former part of my letter. Sir John Hawkins told it to me last Sunday. When Dr. Johnson was at work on his Shakspeare, Sir John said to him, "Well! Doctor, now you have finished your dictionary, I suppose you will labour your present work *con amore* for your reputation." "No Sir," said Johnson, "nothing excites a man to write but necessity." This was but the text—now for the illustration. A clergyman told Sir John very lately, that being with Johnson, he said to him, "Doctor, you have such command of your pen you can do anything: I wish you would write me a sermon." "No Sir," said the Mercenary, "I cannot

write but for money; since I have dealt with the heathens, (the booksellers) I have no other inspiration. I knew they could not do without me, and I made them pay five guineas a sheet for my Rasselas; you must pay me, if I write for you;" and the five guineas per sheet no doubt was the price, but I do not know why he called the booksellers *heathens,* unless for their worshipping such an uncouth idol as he is, yet he has other motives than lucre,—prejudice, and bigotry, and pride, and presumption, and arrogance, and pedantry are the hags that brew his ink, though wages alone supply him with paper.

How could you forget to tell me of Mr. Whitehed's verses on Nuneham; I am charmed with them. They are the best he ever wrote, except *Variety.*

They say you do not come to town this winter. I am not surprised; your friends here do not seem to be much in your thoughts!

Friday.

I had not sealed my letter so can add a paragraph or two. The House of Commons sat till three this morning, when they voted that the conduct of the navy last year had been the most perfect imaginable; however there were 183 dissentients to 208 admirers. I suppose people will be so silly as to expect such a minority will increase, yet I dare to say that on next vote they will not be above forty.

The Duc de Chartres has made Madame de Genlis *Gouverneur de ses Enfans*; why should not Madame de

Schwellenberg be governor to the Prince, and Bishop Hurd wet-nurse? If you love imperial logic, pray read the Emperor's rescript on the suppression of Popery; it is a model of reasoning that may be applied to the restoration of popery here, for it shows that every thing *tient uniquement de la volonté libre et arbitraire des Princes de la terre* — did you ever see so happy an union as that of *libre* and *arbitraire*.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

York, Feb. 9th, 1782.

As I heard from Lord Harcourt that your gout was going off I did not trouble you with my obliging enquiries and I was much immersed in the stupendous work which you did me the favor to send me. I am become almost a bankrupt in my correspondence with all my friends. However, I hope to repay you in full by a nameless something which your communication of that work has occasioned. In which if "I have flapped the fools I have not left the knaves in quiet." But no more of this at present.

I have heard that a man of some consequence, and an F. R. S. (if that be a thing of consequence) who was personally acquainted with Chatterton and to whom he had confessed his fraud, is about to publish what will be a complete confutation; it seems he lay by till the Dean's publication was over,— cruel rogue whoever he be. This account came from Nicols Printer

to the Royal Society. If you can learn more of the matter, I wish you would and let me know it for it may be of use to me.

Though my residence will be out in two days I shall remain here somtime longer, therefore do not change your direction till you hear again from me, when I leave this place I shall go to Aston for I cannot conveniently come to Town till late in the spring.

I have nothing more to add at present except that I am most sincerely yours

W. M.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 14, 1782.

Your letter and mine must have passed each other incog; for we wrote at the same time, but mine was directed to Aston, where I thought you. It may wait, for there was nothing in it that called for dispatch or answer. Yours was more welcome for it promised your coming, though not speedily, and a good effect from Dr. Milles. I had a good pretence for sending for Mr. Nichols himself, as he is to bring me a parcel from Mr. Cole, and he has promised to come with it himself. I had instructed Kirgate to sift him but he only replied in general that answers are expected from Mr. Warton, Mr. Steevens and others. I shall keep this back till I have seen him.

I want you to send me a correct copy of your replicatory ode to the Duchess of Devonshire. I have at

last after some years of solicitation prevailed on Lady Harcourt's modesty to allow me to print a small number of copies of some of her poems. As this is to be a favourite Impression and would of itself be too slender and yet is not to be profaned with miscellaneous indifferents, I shall add Mr. Whitehead's Nuncham and (to introduce *your* Ode) the Duchess's, if the Duke will consent. She does, but he hesitates.. I have always wished that Strawberry should be honoured by something of yours, and here it will be with good company and friends. I might have been dignified by reprinting Lord Hardwicke's ponderous volume of Sir Dudley Carleton, a favour the miser offered me to save himself the expence, but I was brutal enough to refuse it.

Lord Camarthen has not captivated the good will of the world by his late attack on the new Peer — it was ill-timed ; nor was that Temple of Honour and Virtue so unpolluted as to be liable to contamination, one thing, the Insult proved, the servility of the whole military profession who had not been so squeamish.

I forgot to tell you what perhaps you had not heard, Washington is remarkably silent and serious and when he banquetted his prisoner Lord Cornwallis, spoke little, never smiled, but happening to ask if it was true that Lord Dunmore was returning to resume his government of Virginia, and being answered in the affirmative, the hero burst out into a fit of laughter. This was the Philosopher laughing at the Ass that has left mumbling *thistles* for clover that is out of his reach.

I dined on Monday with the Harcourts at Mrs. Montagu's new palace, and was much surprised. Instead of vagaries it is a noble simple edifice. When I came home, I recollected that though I had thought it so magnificent a house there was not a morsel of gilding, it is grand not tawdry, nor larded and embroidered and pomponned with shreds and remnants and clinquant like all the Harlequinades of Adam, which never let the eye repose a moment.

From architecture it is natural for me to slide to *Anecdotes of Painting*. There is a new genius, one Opy, [*Opie*] a Cornish lad of nineteen, who has taught himself to colour in a strong, bold, masterly style by studying nature and painting from beggars and poor children. He has done a head of Mrs. Delany for the King — *oui vraiment*, it is pronounced like Rembrandt, but as I told her, it does not look older than she is, but older than she does.

My next anecdote is only to introduce a *bon mot*. A man I forget his name, has made a drawing, which he says is for a companion to Copley's Death of Lord Chatham. As the latter exhibits all the great Men of Britain, this is to record the beauties, — but what do you think is the subject he has pitched upon; the *Daughter of Pharoah* saving Moses, the Princess Royal is the Egyptain Infanta, accompanied by the Duchesses of Gloucester, Cumberland, Devonshire, Rutland, Lady Duncannon, &c. not all Beauties — well, this Sketch is to be seen *over against Brooks's*. George Selwyn says he could recommend a better companion for this

piece, which should be *the Sons of Pharaoh* (faro) at the opposite house.

Friday 15th.

Mr. Nichols has been with me, and told me that a person whom he did not name, is known to have furnished some material parchment to Chatterton, which will be disclosed in Mr. Warton's Answer to Bryant and Milles. I did not care to be more particularly inquisitive, lest Nichols should have suspected that I wanted to anticipate this discovery myself, but as Mr. Warton is to publish soon, I will give you the earliest notice of what he shall produce.

You have flattered me I doubt with false hopes of your coming in the spring, for Lord Harcourt says you told him in the same breath that you should not come. I am pleased at least that you know I am so interested in your coming that you think it necessary to deceive me. You used to say that the Lord of Aston made you dislike London, does its present Lord make you prefer Aston.

The Bishop of Bristol is dead, we shall know who preached the most fulsome sermon on the late fast by the nomination of the successor. Our High Priests do not abstain from flesh, but in the true Mosaic spirit recommend *letting out blood*.

Adieu! I hate you absent, but I will love you again prodigiously if you will come.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Feb. 23, 1782.

The Power of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished, very true, and it is diminished, a good deal indeed; if it valued the extent to which its rays used to extend; well, but it does not dart its influence so hotly when on that spot that was wont to reflect its beams with so little refraction. Lord Sandwich escaped on Wednesday but by a plurality of nineteen, and last night the American War survived but by one vote, which will not save its life, for even the vigorous and enterprising young Ellis will not dare to cross the Rubicon, when he has but one man more in his army than is on the opposite shore.

These points premised, I have a very imperfect guess at what will ensue. I expect no real good, much confusion no doubt. Sandwich perhaps will decamp. I should not wonder if Lord North should for the first time think seriously of retiring. Rigby and the Lord Advocate, I am sure think of staying, for they last night declared themselves *converted* undoubtedly, if the Minority is likely to be converted into a Majority, besides the Lord Advocate who is stickling to be Treasurer of the Chambers for life, if he should quit his profession to be Treasurer of the Navy too, had not compleated his bargain; when scales are very even, a grain will turn them, a dram of reason

will produce conviction, when a pound of arguments had had no weight.

If I wrote for an hour, I could furnish you with nothing more than conjectures which would be very vague. You had better come yourself and look at the hurricane, which will not end in a moment; yet it may. I have no opinion of the conduct of the Generals who have gained ground; nay, though they have learned to fight, they know not how to improve their advantages, and if they should, they will quarrel about the spoil. However I am clear that it is the present calamitous situation, though it seemed to have made so little impression, that produced the present crisis, aided indeed by the treachery of some of the court, and by the wretched tools it employed; therefore, though the opposition should lose the moment, or the court have address to divide them, the moment will return again, not of *restoring* the constitution, (pray have patience and don't think again of improving it, which would only confound us more) but of opportunities of checking more mischief. That is the most I expect, but it is impossible to crowd into a letter such an inundation of ideas as present themselves. I see comfort in some light, solid hopes in none. I do see new mischiefs at hand that have not yet disclosed themselves, and which I doubt will destroy us at home without the necessary consequences from all we have lost, and from the situation of our monied affairs; but this is a topic I shall not broach on paper. Adieu! I have not time to add a word.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

York, Feb. 24, 1782.

I send the Ode as you desire it, yet I must own that somehow or other I do not feel about it as perhaps I ought, when you mean to do it so much honour. The plain truth is I writ it for her Grace's ear and for that only, and as I think the Duke is perfectly right in hesitating, so I on my part would wish to hesitate if I could; I verily believe certain of the house of Cavendish thought it impertinent in me that I presumed to address her, and I have often been sorry that I did, as matters stand I really think that the Duke's fiat should be had for the publication of my answer as well as that Ode which occasioned it. And thus having honestly told you my mind, I leave you to act as you think proper, adding only, that I hitherto have kept the Ode so much a secret, that I never told either Lord or Lady Harcourt a syllable about the matter. I think as highly of Mr. Whitehead's verses as you do, and I wonder that I forgot to mention them.

I should suspect that if every thing answers according to the scheme laid, you will in about three weeks from the date of this receive a most wonderful production, entitled an Archaeological Epistle to a certain Editor, but suspend all curiosity and forbear even to hint a syllable of expectation to your dearest friends; profound secrecy is on this more necessary than ever, and there is so much difficulty in managing the matter

that perhaps it may be still-born or much mangled in its birth. However, the best precautions are and will be taken about it.

I have with great labour and pain at last completed my Anthem Book for the use of the Church of York, to which I have prefixed a short Essay on Cathedral Music, at which your friend Sir John Hawkins will be hugely offended, and I should not wonder if it produced a controversy. The book itself will not be worth sending you, but I will contrive when the sheets are dry to send you the Essay. I give the impression to our Library here, so it will only be sold on the spot.

I have by no means told you and Lord Harcourt two different stories about my southern expedition, I mean to take London, &c. in my way to Nuncham, and this about the commencement of summer, which I call June, but this plan is not like the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not. I may perhaps come to town much sooner. I don't like George Selwyn's pun about Faro at all, I made a better myself lately, and I will be judged by Lord Harcourt. When the M. de Boüillie had retaken St. Eustatia, I said, alas! I have lived to see the day when French Bouillie is better than English roast beef. Spell the words right before you tell it, &c. Adio

I mean to go to Aston about a week from the date of this, my address then is near Worsop, Notts.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Feb. 28, 1782.

Not only the American war is checked, but despotism itself is at bay. Out of that sink, the House of Commons, seeds of virtue have sprung up. The administration was defeated at one this morning by a minor- grown a major-ity of nineteen. Conway was general, and exerted the spirit of a young cadet; every mouth (that is able to open itself to day) sounds his praises. Those mouths who have so long said nothing but *yes*, you may be sure have not recovered their dismay enough to say *no*. Whether Lord North may not by his fall, and by touching his mother dirt recover, I do not pretend to say, I rather hope he will, for I would have those who have made the war make the peace, and then their measure will be full. The ministers received a less defeat yesterday too at the India House, where their saltpetre contract was set aside. The profits of Thompsom the contractor were to be but 26 out of 49. This and the hoisting Atkinson, a more overgrown contractor still to be one of the five preferred to the loan over all the bankers of London, is another flower in that wreath which binds Lord North's brows, though with no detriment to its predominant poppies. Two such contracts, and two armies taken in a net are the ovations and triumphs of this egregious minister.

Bishop Butler, and I rejoice therefore, is *debouté* of the Deanry of St. Pauls; it was promised to him.

The Chancellor went to Lord North and asked it, he replied, sorry, but it was promised; Confound your promise, then I will get it somewhere else, and got it.

I yesterday received yours of the 24th; we shall have time to consider about the odes, for as yet I have heard nothing of the D. of Devon's imprimatur, and as his brother Lord George Henry was married last night to the great heiress of Northampton, there will be no making application again yet. Nay, I have not yet received what Lady Harcourt will contribute, nor could I have leisure at present to attend to the press, having a thousand avocations, though no real business — not political, for I only sit at home and hear what passes, and shall neither go to my neighbour's levee, nor to that in Grosvenor Square, should either be so happy in his own estimation as to attain a *real* one. The Marquis has long had a plaything one. Alas! I too have a plaything court that takes up some of my time; however I shall always be so insignificant myself as to be ready for my own amusements whenever I have leisure for them. Connections make themselves whether one will or not, but nobody can make one be a minister against one's will, unless one is of as little consequence as Ellis.

I do not even reply to your secret, so much I respect one, but I am sorry you will fall on my poor friend Sir John who is a most inoffensive and good being. Do not wound harmless simpletons, you who can gibbet convicts of magnitude.

As you do not like G. Selwyn's last bon mot, and

dethrone it for one of your own, which I confess is a good one, I shall presume to send you one of mine, though I sin against my own modesty, and abhor self applause even in the humble guise of a saying. Last week at Princess Amelie's (another of my courts in miniature) Lady Margaret Compton said she was as poor as Job. "I wonder said Lady Barrymore, why people only say *as poor as Job*, and never as rich, for in one part of his life he had great riches." "Yes, said I, Madam, but then they pronounce his name differently, and call him *Jobb*."

As I calculate that you will be at Aston in two days, I shall direct this thither, and hope it will stay for you. I have not time for a word more.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, March 10, 1782.

Though nobody can admire the spirit with which General Conway has conducted himself throughout the great business, nor anybody be more willing to congratulate him and the nation on his success, yet I suppose you and I are agreed that the triumph will be but momentary, and that so far from making any material change either in ministerial men or measures, the nation will continue to be duped, nay, rather insulted much longer, and will take it all patiently, as to either restoring or improving the constitution, which in a former letter you say would only confound us more,

that seems now out of the question. What is absolutely gone can never be either improved or restored, and I think you have now full demonstration that what you call and have long called the constitution does not by any means exist; if it does, your father (I speak it with due respect to his memory) told a great fib. But truce with politics—Sir John Hawkins is even a better subject, because you say he is an inoffensive and good being, and at worst a harmless simpleton, be it so, though I think he has shown himself petulant and impertinent in several parts of his history, and especially on the subject of honest John Gay; yet I assure you I have taken no further notice of him than the subject I writ upon and the principles I meant to support obliged me to do. I borrowed largely from his farrago in order to prove the very contrary to that which he adduced his Anecdotes to establish, and acknowledging the debt perhaps I have been yet a little ungrateful to my creditor, but my sarcasms are but few, and not sharp-pointed; yet he, and all the fautors of Old Music, must of necessity be offended at them. The sheets were not dry when I left York, therefore I could not send you them, but 'tis no great matter, they would be but of little if any amusement to you. I wish, rather than hope, that something else will prove more so, but I am very dubious on the matter, a week more I fancy will determine it and I shall expect your earliest opinion with some impatience.

Mr. George Selwyn's *bon mot* was a bad one I still insist upon it, mine was a better, yours is a better still,

but Sheridan's is as you say not only better than a *bon mot*, but equal to any thing that was ever said best. I thank you most heartily for it.

I have at length received a letter from Sir Joshua which tells me that his Annotations are finished. I hope to receive them soon, but as they must be printed at the York Press, which works slow though sure, the book cannot come out till next winter. My English Garden corrected and in a smaller form, like my volume of Poems, is already printed, but that also will not be published sooner, as it will wait for a Commentary which a friend of mine (whom you don't know, but I wish you did) Mr. Burgh is writing upon it. You who can keep volumes ready printed back for years, will do it with an ill grace if you rebuke my tardiness. I hear a Mr. Malone is the proto-antagonist of Dean Milles or Mr. Bryant, I know not which, and I suppose Mr. T. Warton will speedily second him. I read your unpublished letter on that subject over again, and am still more sorry than ever that it is not in general hands. Certainly common sense was never so grossly affronted as it has been on this subject and you ought to have defended her or his cause (for I will not fix the gender of common sense) publicly. But you will smart for it let me tell you, and very soon be forced to claim kindred, yes and close kindred too, with a personage you little wot of, and will not think yourself much honoured by the relationship. Do I not speak parables?

Wait in silence for the explanation.

Yours, &c.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, March 14, 1782.

No I cannot agree that General Conway's success will have no effect. I do not mean that it will occasion any change of *men*, which I think could do little good now, but it certainly will check the wild and obstinate prosecution of the American war, and before it can be resumed, the obstinate would not be able to prosecute it, as they will have neither men nor money to send, fleets to transport them, nor any whither to send them. I do agree with you that what is gone cannot be improved, yet what is gone might be restored; I do not say that I think it likely it will, but I am surprised at hearing you quote *my father* against me. How will your committee approve your citing him, whom in their censorial condemnation of friend and foe they have confounded in a sentence with the worst enemies of this country? It does not suit one in whom all praise would seem partiality, to defend his injured character, though his temperate use of power for twenty years without one instance of extending it will not prove his abuse of it, any more than his poverty would prove his wealth; yet allow even me to say that he had one gift that would not have been disserviceable even to Mr. Wyvil himself, that of common sense. My father knew that to govern or serve mankind, it was necessary to understand them, and to lead, not to dictate to them. When I see you, I can prove to you

that there is more foundation for what I say, than I will specify now; but as I never presume to dispute with you, but because I know we mean the same end, and as I never differ with you but with regret and with deference, and with perfect friendship, I will dismiss a subject that it is too late to recall, and which I would not mention if I had not seen the mischiefs that have happened to the best cause in the world by the want of union and mutual condescension. Hereafter I will give you three memorable and fatal instances.

After Dinner.

I had written the above this morning and went out. When I came home to dinner I found Mr. Stonhewer had left a message that he could send a letter to you if he had it by six o'clock. I can therefore write more plainly, though I have not time but for a few words.

If it is the general belief that the Administration cannot stand, that belief will advance their fall, yesterday it was universally said that Lord North would resign, — to-day that he will risk the battle to-morrow. I am glad of that if he is to go, for it will make the Opposition less tractable. Many attempts at negotiation have been and are making, my wish would be that the Ministers might be able to maintain their ground sometime longer, for three reasons: opposition would be more united, new misfortunes would contribute to exasperate the country and the country must be more changed against the court than I doubt it is,

before the fall will be heavy enough, before the chief person is subdued enough, before any new set can do any good, and before they can maintain their posts six months; for if they can do no good, if the chief person, the House of Lords, half the country, all the Scotch, the army, the clergy and the law are against them, will not seven worse spirits enter into the House than are there already, not worse than the present, but the present grown worse, if that is possible! This is the quintessence of my creed, I have not time to detail it.

I did not publish my letter on Chatterton, because I am sick of most things, and especially of being the subject of talk. I wish to be tranquil and forgotten and to have leisure for my little space to come, to finish what I have to do. I shall be very sorry therefore if your new production hooks me into the question more; however, the tempest is growing so loud that my name will soon be blown away!

I do wish you would come to town. It is not to invite you to a share of the wreck with which I shall concern myself no more than you, but it is my opinion that the nation itself will be a wreck; if not as a patriot, have you no curiosity as a philosopher to survey a huge dismal scene? How can you content yourself with information from scraps of letters and blundered and misrepresented relations in newspapers.

Soame Jenyns has published some new Metaphysical Disquisitions, I have not gotten through half though a small volume, yet I am persuaded, as I was of his last that it is *ironie*, though as he belongs to Lord Hard-

wicke and the Court, I do not doubt but the University of Oxford will think him as orthodox as foolish Bishop Bagot. You shall judge by one position; he says that no man can believe a future state on the authority of the New Testament without believing a pre-existent state on the same authority; one of his arguments is, that our sufferings here would be unjust if punishments not for previous misdeeds; is this orthodox doctrine? he seems to me to act like the present Ministers who have more than once adopted a question of the Opposition, and loaded it with absurdities in order to throw it out. Can we believe then an omnipotent and all wise Being inflicted punishments and at the same time took away from the sufferers all knowledge, all consciousness of the crimes they had committed?

The hour presses and I must finish, though I have a thousand things more to say; but if ever persuasion were to attend my words, I should wish it were now, when I would tempt you to town. There is a gleam of some good amidst clouds of evils hanging over us — would you be out of the way of contributing a finger towards dispelling them? at least come and see how the moment is lost or cast away.

I rejoice on Mr. Burgh's intended commentary on your garden, such things will survive whatever perishes, and may last till this island is ranked among the Nations again. — I have written in such a hurry, I don't know whether you can read me.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, March 15, 1782.

When I came home last night (after I had sent away my letter) I found your present of an old Cheshire cheese on my table, which I could not send for, as you had not told me the carrier's name. Though I never sup I could not help eating a whole luncheon of it, and without compliment, never tasted better; I was diverted too with the pains you had taken to pack it up, which I should have thought an effort beyond your patience, but there is nothing you cannot do from gardening to preserving the mould of an old cheese. As I am not a glutton by nature I cannot enjoy it alone; and yet I doubt there is so much of it rotten that few but epicures will relish it. However the parts that are sound are exquisite and must be delicious to all who love cheese. They who do not, would be choked with it it is so strong — yet that is certainly a merit, and will make it keep the longer, and shows with what good cream it was made. I beg your pardon for saying so much on a cheese, but gratitude does not weigh the materials of a present but the intention, and when a gift is perfectly to my taste, as this is, I am more thankful than for a piece of plate whose value consists in its heaviness, and not in the fashion.

I must now jump from the dairy to Literature. Soame Jenyns's book is a *chef d œuvre* of impudent profligacy — at least the seventh chapter on government

and civil liberty is so. It contains a direct attack on liberty and tells the people that they have a right in turbulent and factious times to call for arbitrary power. This is more direct than even Macpherson, Johnston or Sir John Dalrymple have gone. The Clergy will forgive his undermining the new Testament, if he can give them despotism in its place. I wish you would persuade Mr. Burgh to answer this galley-slave; nobody is more capable, no, nor of confuting his whole book, which is a very small one. It would be useful too to unravel his irony which is mighty creditable to his patron Lord Hardwick, that housekeeper to the Church, and of whom one thinks with horror when one recollects, that after driving his brother to despair for accepting the seals, he and his other brothers are the most servile advocates for a court, which the Earl treated Charles with such bitterness for consenting to serve.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, March 21, 1782.

You and I shall now I think agree on one great point, as I trust we do on most others, you will allow that the Constitution is not quite gone when the House of Commons in two months overturns an Administration that had taken such deep root. In one word, Lord North at the head of the mercenaries laid down his arms yesterday and surrendered at discretion, the

Opposition having refused to listen to any overtures till the constitutional preliminaries that they demanded were granted.

This is precisely all I know, not how the surrender was determined; perhaps from the timidity of the Ministers who might see that obstinacy *in the last resort* would draw tenfold danger on their heads. In short the Royal yacht was expediting at Deptford! Still I should not wonder if no new arrangement yet took place, provided any of the last set could be hardy enough to rally.

Who are to be the new ministers? I neither know nor care, I mean from personal attachments. If the new mean and *attempt* well, I hope all the friends to their Country will assist and support them, aye and have patience, for every thing cannot be effected at once — nor any thing but a restoration of the State-ministers if there is any division amongst the friends of their Country. This is what every art will be used to procure, it has been the grand nostrum of the whole system and will be doubly exerted when they have lost the Treasury.

Time I have not to write more did I know more; nor shall I know more than the rest of the town for no change shall ever make me connected with any administration, though I will reverence any that retrieves Liberty. I have the comfort of seeing that America may be free if it will. It is the only country that ever had an opportunity of choosing its constitution at once, it may take the best one that ever was, ours, and

correct its defects. I have been interrupted again, for everybody is running about the town to hear or tell, and this house is in the way of everybody — but I cannot conclude without thanking you again for your present, which is more to my taste than ever present was. It is high-flavoured to the most exquisite degree, in short I cannot express a quarter of what I think. I do not know that you ever pleased me more.

Monday, 7 o'clock.

Thank God! thank God! what remains of this country and constitution may be saved, no art or industry but has been employed to divide and break the opposition. Lord Shelburne has resisted nobly and wisely and they triumph together. The Court has yielded completely — though not till this morning — when it had not above three hours left to hold out. Yesterday a struggle was made to add Lords Gower and Weymouth to the new cabinet, even they are given up, and I should think by Lord Weymouth's usual poltroonery. The constitutional points are granted. The new cabinet, are to be Lord Thurlow, Chancellor, *(tant pis)*, Lord Camden, President, Lord Rockingham, first Lord of the Treasury, Admiral Keppel, of the Admiralty, General Conway, Commander in Chief, Lord Shelburne and Charles Fox, Secretaries of State, to whom are to be added the Duke of Richmond as Master of the Ordnance and Lord John Cavendish as Chancellor of the Exchequer; not a word has been said of the other places nor do I care a straw who has them. The

Citadel in general is well garrisoned ; and as they can not hope for favour they must stand on national ground. I have not time to say a syllable more. I could tell you very curious passages but cannot write them — pray be reconciled to the House of Commons — I am sure this is not the *Lord's* doing — though it is marvellous in our eyes. Adieu.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

March 23, 1782.

> Thus far our arms have with success been crowned,
> And Rome in tears.

I was in the right, I told you division would be attempted and so it has been, Lord Rockingham's constitutional demands not proving palatable. On Thursday evening Lord Shelburne was sent for to a house in the Park and after a parley of three hours, declined; next morning Lord Gower was tried: Ditto. At four o'clock to-day, and this is Saturday, no new step had been taken; if the white flag is not hung out this evening or to-morrow, I do not know what may not happen on Monday, nothing that will break your heart or mine. These vain struggles have hampered ten thousand times more: Lord Rockingham may dictate his own terms. The Erse nation is furious at Lord North: Fingal himself told him, "Remember, my Lord, I do not desert *you*."

George Selwyn said an excellent thing t'other night. Somebody at White's missing Keene and Williams, Lord North's confidants, asked where they were? "Setting up with the corpse I suppose," said Selwyn. This was quite in character for him, who has been joked with for loving to see executions and dead bodies.

Mr. Warton's answer to Milles and Bryant is come out. There is good in it, but he does not unfold his arguments sufficiently and, I think, does not take off one or two of Bryant's strongest arguments. At the end he shows that the Dean has strangely disguised the material affair of blacking the parchments. This I take to be the detection Mr. Nichols announced. It is no wonder that Mr. Warton's answer appeared flat to me, it certainly is not the best answer that has appeared.

If your own curiosity will not lead you to town, it would be in vain for me to solicit you. Folks generally wish they could have lived in historic moments, instead of reading them. There is a double reason for being witness to them, when one can, which is, that they who can be spectators, cannot be readers, for the story is not written till they are dead. It is true, most things are in newspapers now as soon as they happen, but so are ten thousand things that have not happened, and who can winnow them, but on the spot? I pity posterity, who will not be able to discern a thousand part of the lies of Macpherson and Bate; but I do not pity you who might know better if you

pleased. However, I will not scold you so much as you deserve, because I never can praise you a quarter so much as you deserve. Adieu.

P. S. *Vogue la galère ! v.* my last.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, March 23, 1782.

I have two letters to thank you for, one by the post and another by a private hand, and I suppose it likely that a third is on the road, as I have not yet heard from yourself any thing concerning the decisive event of the 20th, however I will not wait for that as I shall not probably have time to answer it to morrow by the return of the post. I think every thing that this poor country has now to hope depends on a thorough sweep; if there be any compromise whatever, I own for myself, I shall expect little permanent good. I wish therefore Lord North had held out longer, that the opposition by being still more exasperated, had been more firmly united; other folks I hope will be more firm (I think that is the term when applied as I mean it) and that firmness may answer the same good purpose. I suppose this present week will be more pregnant with important events than any the nation has beheld since 1688, nevertheless I can very philosophically stay here and satisfy myself with the intelligence sent me by you and a few other good friends.

I am sorry that you and I retain different sentiments concerning the only political measure in which I ever publicly concerned myself. However I perceive you have candour enough to think, that whatever I have done or may do in that matter proceeds from an upright intention. I mean to go to York in Easter week to our next committee meeting, and indeed had I been in town I should now have thought it necessary to have gone down thither, though a much longer journey, in order to have preserved, what I hope I shall ever preserve, the character of consistency.

I hope to see Soame Jennyns' book soon and have already intimated to Mr. Burgh your wishes on that head, which I don't doubt he will attend to. Sir Joshua Reynolds has at last sent me his notes; they are well written and I think will be of service to the art. I mean to put them to press when I go to York, so that I hope the whole book will be ready for next winter.

You praise the cheese I sent you so much that I wish

It had been Stilton for your sake;

it was the best however that such a country mouse as I could send you. I fancy though you will find few folks that will relish or even taste it at present, they have better dainties to feast on. I wish however you would make the experiment on Lord Harcourt, who never I believe eat a bit of that sort of rotten cheese in his life, and will turn up his nose at it; tell him

from me it does not stink half so much as a great deal of French cheese which he is so fond of.

In one of my letters I had an account that the royal yachts are preparing for immediate service: what can this mean? it cannot be news to you, if it is you may know it from the person who told you that he could forward a letter from you to

your most obliged servant
and sincere friend
W. MASON.

P.S. March 24.

Your expected third letter is arrived, but I must own I cannot impute so much to the House of Commons as you do, they have turned out a Ministry I grant you, but only because that Ministry could not pay up to the expense of a majority; not from any intrinsic power in the Opposition, there are bounds to corruption as to the sea, so far can it go and no further; those bounds are sooner come at than I expected, for I thought that the nation might have answered even a third loan, which I find is not the case. I heartily hope that the next ministry, if it means to proceed on the same plan (and I fear it has not one at present much better) may find some other scheme than loans to amuse an unsullied nation. More news pray! more, more, more, more, more. I pray'd to-day (*ex officio*) at church, and I prayed *silently* for *Firmness*.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

March, 26, 1782.

Most certainly I do not agree with you in thinking, that the House of Commons turned out the late Ministers solely because the latter had not money enough to purchase the former, this I cannot possibly agree to, because I know to the contrary. The House of Commons have that merit; it cannot be denied to them; and it is as true, that the House did this, though the Majority had been bought, and though there was money enough, and enough was offered to buy them over again: but for this time they had virtue enough to reject it, and you are bound as a Divine to accept those who have come in at eleven and three quarters o'clock.

In another point I was quite of your opinion, I wished the contest to last longer, but the victory has been so compleat by the other side holding out to eleven and three quarters too, that three months longer could not have added to it. This was owing to Lord Rockingham's own single firmness. He first would not hear of a treaty, till his five national and constitutional points were granted, and at last rejected every reserve, and thus has triumphed without the shadow of a compromise of any sort, this is most religiously true, he deserves all praise and all support; and I do think you will believe me, who think very meanly of his abilities, and have not, nor ever shall have

even distant or indirect connection with him, and who have cause to be displeased with him for *more* than personal rudeness to the Duchess of Gloucester, but Princes and Ministers are all alike to me. I will do justice to them indifferently, and prefer my country and its liberty to either and to both. I do beseech *you* who love both as well as I do, not to change your opinion, but to act with prudence and temper, and not gratify the public enemies with what they are labouring to effect, disunion among the friends of their country. If the new Ministers disappoint our hopes by their own faults, they deserve no mercy, but let them be tried. They have every thing to undo and to do, and remember, that virtue is their only instrument. Mr. Conway wisely and honestly warned them in public, that they must not fight even enemies with the weapon corruption. They must therefore be reasoned with, as they must reason with the nation. Good sense will have weight with a virtuous Administration, if they are not, a virtuous one — *Ora pro nobis.*

I am going to Strawberry to repose after this conflict and to avoid the gossiping of the town on the disposition of plans about which I do not care a straw, nor know one beyond the Cabinet. There are various items of retrospect that I should wish, but which I dare to say will be forgotten or thought obsolete in the multiplicity of greater objects, nor shall I have *voix en chapitre.* Mr. Conway and the Duke of Richmond are the only two with whom I have more than civil intercourse, and that I shall let dwindle with the others.

now they are Ministers. In short I can now go to Strawberry without anxiety.

You ask for more and more and more. I could satisfy you, but not in a letter, nor would you believe me easily, though you do not want faith in the sort of things I should tell you. As to promotions and such *miseres*, I have told you I do not trouble my head about them. In all probability I shall see much more of my neighbour at Bushy, Lord North, than of any Minister. He is very good company. I can not be suspected of paying court, which I never did in his power: and though I have a very bad opinion of him as a Minister, he is so totally out of favour as well as out of place, that methinks, that negative merit has its value.

Wednesday 27th.

Perhaps every thing I have been saying is useless: perhaps it may not signify a rush what our speculative opinions may be. Since I wrote yesterday the former part of this, I doubt whether the panic is not recovered so much, as to intend not to let the new settlement take place at all. I cannot explain further and desire you to keep this to yourself, but I shall not be surprised if the laying down the arms without any condition was not a feint, an ambuscade of a very serious nature; however, the other side is neither blinded nor off their guard. They see too that they have nothing to expect but every possible insincerity

and treachery even if allowed to proceed, which I repeat I doubt, though the principals are to kiss hands to day; but we shall find that there is another House that will want correction much more than that of the Commons. The present temper of the latter should be encouraged, not reviled nor split into different opinions, for its weight alone can bear down that of the other. If I do not speak sense and truth, you will scoff my ideas, and if I do not hereafter convince you that I have acted on your own principles, you will have reason to think me a rascal; I have dreaded something worse than I have hinted at, though some time ago I did absolutely tell you I had fears. When I see you I will unfold what I cannot give you a glimpse of now, and which will show you that I have acted very differently from what would be believed. Bring this letter with you and I will unravel all; but nothing was ever less seated than the new Administration is yet, you will therefore not be surprised if you hear it is dissolved.

Whatever happens I shall be overjoyed if Mr. Burgh condescends to adopt my idea: yet I wish a less vanescent stigma than can be affixed by controversy were imprinted on the old servile Buffoon's front—but I must finish and go out.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, March 30, 1782.

The hint which you give in the last part of your last quadrates (to use a stiff word for my style is hardly yet come to itself) with my previous fears; I know not however whether I should call them fears when certain hopes are blended with them, for in case what is expected should happen, I think it would end in what would bring matters to more consistency than ever, and therefore I hope full as much as I fear. The chymists will tell you that all heterogeneous mixtures will unite only by strong agitation, and I hardly think there has yet been enough of that to make the gruel thick and slabb. This puts me in mind of a strange blunder which the author of the epistle, which you so much commend, has made concerning Macbeth's witch, there is no such phrase to be found in all Shakspeare's Play, as that of *spilling much more blood;* and the great Mr. Stevens (though an admirer of the Poem, and suspected by Dr. Johnson of being the author of it) has found out this unpardonable error. Now if I was acquainted with the real author I would vindicate him in this manner, that the passage is to be found in Dryden's additions to that play, for I remember very well to have heard these lines on the stage set to good old music by Mathew Locke,

> He must, he will, he shall spill much more blood,
> And become worse to make his title good.

I have heard also a pleasant story that Dr. Johnson to whom a present was sent, read the poem before the preface, and thinking all that was said there was ironical, pronounced it to be superexcellent; on reading the preface afterwards he gravely said, "I find the author is no friend of mine, nevertheless I cannot gainsay his poetical talents."

Now that you are in your Strawberry retreat before strawberries are even in blossom, I think you cannot do better *en attendant* than spare a leisure hour in turning once more a commentator, that a certain future edition of later works may not be defective. I mean to set off towards York to morrow as soon as *mes Pâques* are here finished. What sort of meeting there will be between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and me I can hardly guess, considering we go on somewhat different business; however you may depend upon my behaviour both to him and others to be such as shall not justly be deemed offensive, and I have great reason to think from the temper in which I have found Mr. Duncombe (who called upon me yesterday) and some others of my brethren in iniquity, that all our proceedings will be as temperate as we think them constitutional.

You have a new accession if you please to your list of noble authors in the Earl of Effingham, who has just printed a little pamphlet called an Essay on the Nature of a Loan, which better judges than I am think extremely clear and well written. It was printed at York, and I fancy by this time is to be had at

Debrett's. To those who know the man and his conversation, it will be a great curiosity; in my own opinion he has talents for every thing, did not his way of life make him nothing. I mean to return here in a week's time; if any thing in the meanwhile should occur, a letter will find me at the Deanery; with a thousand thanks for all your intelligence and other favours and partialities, I conclude

most truly yours

W. M.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, April 1, 1782.

You will be perfectly content with the new administration if it can hobble on even for a short time, which however I must doubt. The Duke of Richmond is a man after your own heart, and after mine too, though I do not approve of his visions more than of yours, which seem to be the same, but when men have the same ends I do not quarrel with the means, on the contrary, I am so desirous of union amongst the upright, that I am for acquiescence and temper, as the enemies are still both numerous and potent (potent because numerous) and labouring to sow division which they would enjoy and profit of. There is to be a committee of the House of Commons chosen to examine into its decays, and study a remedy, which when fixed on, the ministers will support! I may not be accurate

in my definition, but this is the purport. If I gave loose to my own speculations, I should say that when a house is tumbling it will not save it to new furnish one of the apartments, much less when there are people in two other chambers undermining the upholsters. The Chancellor it is said declares against the constitutional bills, and will Lord Shelburne cordially promote them? In short I see such seeds of mischief already sown, and the vanquished are so far from wearing an air of defeat that I have not the smallest expectance of duration to the new system. The watch word republicanism is given out against it, and grievous complaints made of the hardships, violences, and insults put on the crown. Lord Rockingham was not admitted even to an audience before the moment of his kissing hands, and much resistance I am told is made to a large creation of peers, who might a little balance the household troops in that garrison. The high priests and Scotch peers countenanced *against* the ministers, will baffle any good that can be attempted. In the meantime public distresses will pour in from all quarters, and if peace cannot be attained, I see no prospect of any thing but ruin, which if the new ministers stay, will be imputed to them; but I believe the true authors will soon have an opportunity and the honour of completing their work reinforced by part of the new administration, who will not return to opposition if accomplices in blowing up the new settlement; a plan that does not seem to be disguised.

This is enough to say on a transient interlude; it is better however than if they had been smiled into hopes of favour. They see how ungracious they are. It is determined that they shall not be pleased with their situation, that they shall be clogged in every attempt to please the country, and consequently it is hoped that the country will not be pleased; of all this they are aware, but they will be wiser than I if they can do what they are hindered from doing, and if they can do what will be expected from them, though they will not be enabled to do it. Thus the way is paved for the return of the old again, and I shall be much surprised if the present administration receive a quarter's salary; however that point will be sooner cleared up. If they are permitted to do no good, the same influence can dispossess them again, therefore you will have better evidence than my conjectures. If the country cannot support them, the predominance of the crown is incontrovertible. It will be beggarly majesty indeed, considering that almost every thing else is gone; but a crown is precious in some eyes though set with thorns and stripped of its diamonds.

Do not wonder if I write seldomer, for I shall now be much at Strawberry, where I have been three days. I shall know no more than you will see in the papers. I have no connection with any thing called a minister more than I had two months ago, except the Duke of Richmond and Mr. Conway, and they have so much to do in their own department that I shall see very little even of them.

Unpolitically we are alarmed about the caterpillars which threaten us with famine at least. The servants I could employ and the boys I could hire have been picking the nests in my grounds these three days. If there are any in your region you must have the twigs cut off and burnt with great care not to scatter for fear of spreading them, and no time is to be lost as they are hatching.

Your favourite Lady Laura is to be married to her cousin Lord Chewton, an excellent young man, but very poor, still we are all much pleased.

I direct to York, for you said you should be there this week.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

April 2, 1782.

Though I wrote to you but last night, I must write again to tell you the extreme satisfaction you have given me by a letter I have just received, in which you say your county will act with temper. Never were temper and wisdom more necessary than at this moment, the only one we may ever have and in which every devil is at work to divide us, and half Styx at work to calumniate our party and represent us as worse levellers than John of Leyden and his Anabaptists. I should regard the latter with contempt were there no danger of the other. I do therefore dread more being exacted and expected from the new

Ministers, than will depend on them to perform, clogged with Judas's, thwartable by the House of Lords and standing on no foundation but a *quicksand*. The D. of Richmond is as firmly yours as you can wish, in truth even more than you will like, for his exceeding scrupulousness and abstract notions, will I fear, counteract one *capital point* that I desire as much as you. I cannot explain myself here; you must bring me my letters for many solutions The Chancellor of the Exchequer I have not seen since he has been so, nor knew he was going to York but by yours. I have neither attachment to nor connection with any Ministers, but my two friends, nor shall ever see any of the others. I write from my own opinions and principles, and can have no view but that of serving the cause at my heart, I never shall profit by any Minister or Ministry. I am ready to part with any thing, and one day or other you will know my sincerity and disinterestedness, but I scorn ostentation, and am content to do the thing that is right.

I am highly diverted with your story of Johnson; but like him, I must do justice: I admire him for not retracting his applause. But he surprises me by suspecting Steevens. Nobody else guesses but one author: and when I wonder at their guess, and plead that person's extreme indolence, and how impossible that he should take such pains, they cry; "but who else is capable of writing so well:" is it possible to answer *that* with truth? For the comment you honour me by requiring, I will with pride undertake it, if you accept

of me, but I give you notice that I decay every day, inwardly as well as outwardly, nay I have nothing left but my thumbs that are not lame, and I tremble lest I should soon be quite incapable of using my hands at all; you must send me or bring me the other comment, for I kept no copy of it, nor remember a syllable of it, nor the style, and I should wish it to be as uniform as I can make it in my present debility, and without repititions.

Who is Mr. Duncombe? Consider how few persons I see and how little I know beyond my own sphere. All my labours tend to preserve union, that if the present system blows up, as I apprehend it will, a respectable force may remain together, or our victory has destroyed us. Charles Fox has acted a manly and most sensible part; and said the most necessary thing where it was most requisite; but this is one of the things to be explained hereafter. I wish you had not been so positive, but would have come to town. It is impossible to write all, and what cannot be written is the most essential.

I must add a curious history, connected with our present politics, and only for your own ear, as I would by no means hurt the person concerned. When I attended the theatre about Mr. Jephson's play, Mr. Harris asked me, I thought accidentally, what I thought of Mr. Bentley's Harlequinade, the Wishes. I commended it to the skies as it deserved; shortly after I received a letter from the author, reciting what I had said to Mr. H. telling me it was to be revived and de-

siring leave, with many compliments on my *excellent* taste and judgment, to send it to me for revisal. I replied *bonnement,* that I had said what I thought and what I always had said, and with no idea of its being repeated to him, and I consented to receive the copy, at the same time telling him the faults I recollected and which I intended to mark for correction. Judge of my astonishment when I found some admirable scenes totally omitted, many of the best traits of wit that I have often repeated cashiered, and the whole interlarded and converted into the most gross, most illiberal, and most vulgar libel on the Opposition and in particular on the City of London! It is true that affecting impartiality there were some strokes levelled at the Ministers, but which they would well have forgiven, for the satire fell chiefly on their pusillanimity for not having hanged their chief opponents as traitors, rebels, spies and confederates of France. It is also true that amidst this Billingsgate, there was humour that made me laugh. I instantly lapped up the packet, told the author that he had totally spoiled his piece and that I could not possibly have any thing to do with a composition of that sort. Mr. Harris came to me again. I cut him short and asked him how he could imagine I would be concerned in abuse on my friends. Well! the piece was announced, and the road strewed with garlands; but behold the Administration was defeated! — the palm-branches gathered up and the piece withdrawn. On Friday as I went to Strawberry I saw Mr. Harris at his own door at Knightsbridge: I stopped,

and smiled, and said, "so, Sir, the Wishes are withdrawn." "Lord, Sir," said he, "we should have had the House pulled down."

I must so far justify Mr. Bentley that I am persuaded there was more sincere zeal than interest in this outrageous invective. He always was, not by education certainly, a Tory by principle, even when he lived at Strawberry, we frequently had disputes then.

Do not mention this story, for his play may appear hereafter and he wants the profits from it. Should there be tolerable times, he nor the manager will risk the ribaldry. If there are not, it will be thickened and will suit the Augustan Age in which it will appear, while the author like those of Hudibras and of Absalom and Achitophel will have prostituted their talents for a butt of sack and a wretched stipend ill paid. Adieu!

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

York, April 6, 1782.

I thank you for your last two letters, the former of which was of good service, as I ventured to report out of it (but without naming my correspondent) the piece of news concerning that committee which was to meet to examine into the decays &c. which I found highly acceptable to all who heard it.

I now send you our resolutions, which I hope you will think as temperate, as any that could be made

without totally giving up the object for which we are associated, for you will see in the third that we do not at present *i. e.* at our general county meeting which cannot be before next Christmas, mean to push more than one of our objects; the shortening the duration of parliament being not there mentioned, and for the other, which we do mean to push, I believe we have a majority of the present cabinet in its favour.

My fears forewent your former letter, for I thought I perceived from a short parenthesis in an account which Lord John gave to the Dean and I of the manner in which the change came about, that the seeds of jealousy which a certain great personage had not sown, but watered, were sprouting, and this I dread more than any machinations of the fallen party.

The inclosed account gives you only the proceedings of Thursday. Yesterday we did little more than fix the day of our adjournment, which is the 31st of October. I moved a resolution to this purpose, that in case any manœuvres of the late corrupt ministry or their tools and adherents should so far succeed as to break the present arrangement of that administration in which we have justly put so much confidence, that then the sub-committee should call us together again on the shortest notice, in order that a general meeting of the county might be called immediately to take every efficacious step (within the bounds of legality) to support the men and measures, which we had already declared that we only put confidence in, for the support of our liberty and property &c.; but this resolution

was thought to convey a doubt of the permanency of the present system, and therefore we adjourned to the above day "subject however to an earlier call of any five of our members."

To change the subject, let me tell you that you never used a weaker argument in your life than that of the indolence of a certain author; the case in which you urged it admits more indolence than any other; the idlest cook-maid in the kingdom may make a pudding if any of her fellow *sarvants* will pick the plumbs and make them ready to mix with the batter, she has nothing to do then but stir them about and tye them tight in the pudding-bag; so no more at present from

your sinceare frind till dethe

CATHERINE CULLINDAR.

Your story from the playhouse is a curious one. I suppose I have scaped a scowring, for I guess the flirts at my poor Greek chorus would have been retained for they were really excellent; I shall keep the secret.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Saturday night, late, April, 1782.

I have so overwhelmed you with letters lately, that this shall be a very short one; but when you have pleased me, I must tell you so. I met Lord John Cavendish this evening at Gloucester House; he told

me how obligingly you had behaved to him, and how wise and temperate your resolutions had been; you have done all I wished, which was to allow time for trial. If new Ministers act like the old they deserve no favour, and of all men I shall not be their apologist. Their own sense, I should think, would tell them that they can never be favourites were they desirous, for the last have made it impossible for any successors to merit equal grace: we have neither dominions, money nor credit enough to sacrifice on the altar of flattery to render the idol so propitious as it was to the predecessors. If these sincerely attempt reparation, *and continue united,* their labours may produce some good, and that good and those effects may maintain them. To those reflections I leave them; I shall neither be of their councils nor council for them, if they prove not what they ought to be.

I wish it was possible to give you a full account of a Tragedy that has just been lent to me, an adequate one is totally impossible. The Bishop-Count of Bristol, whom I met t'other night at Mrs. Delany's, desired to send me a play, that he confessed he thought equal to the noblest flights of Shakespeare. Such an honour was not to be refused. Arrived the thickest of quartos, full as the egg of an ostrich, with great difficulty I got through it in two days. It is on the story of Lord Russel. John Lilburne himself could not have more whig-zeal. The style extremely deficient in grammar is flogged up to more extravagant rants than Statius's or Claudian's, with a due proportion of tumbles into

the kennel. The devils and damnation supply every curse with brimstone, and hell's sublime is coupled with Newgate, St. James's and Stock's market, every scene is detached, and each as long as an act; and every one might be omitted without interrupting the action, for plot or conduct there is none. Jefferies and Father Petre open the drama, and scourge one another up to the blackest pitch of iniquity. They are relieved by Algernon Sidney and Lord Howard; the first rants like a madman and damns the other to the pit of hell. Lady Russell is not a whit less termagant. The good Earl of Bedford on the contrary is as patient as Job, and forgets the danger of his son to listen to the pathetic narrative of his old steward, whose wife had been Lord Russel's nurse and died at seeing him sent to the Tower. The second act begins and never ends with Lord Bedford's visit to Newgate, where he gives money to the jailor for leave to see his son. The jailor chouses him, calls himself Emperor of Newgate, and promises to support his dignity by every act of royal tyranny: compares himself to Salmoneus, and talks of Nabobs, Stock's alley, and Whitfield. Lord Russel comes to the grate, gives more money equally in vain. At last the monarch-jailor demands £1000, Russel promises it: the jailor tenders a promissory note. Lord Russel takes it to sign and find it stipulates £7000 and so on. King Charles and the Duke of York enter, quarrel about religion, but agree on cutting Lord Essex's throat, with many such pathetic amœnities. The last act contains the whole trial *verbatim*, with the pleadings of

the Attorney and Solicitor Generals; Tillotson and Burnet are called to the prisoner's character,—in vain, —he is condemned. Lord Bedford falls at the King's feet begging his son's life, the King tells him he teazes him to death, and that he had rather be still in Scotland listening to nine hour's sermons delivered:—

——Through the funnel
Of noses lengthened down into proboscis.

This is the only flower I could retain of so dainty a garland; the piece concludes with Lady Russel's swooning on hearing the two strokes of the axe. Now you are a little acquainted with our second Shakespeare! Be assured that I have neither exaggerated in the character given, nor in the account of this tedious but very diverting Tragedy, which as the Earl Bishop told me Mr. Cumberland has had a mind to fit to the stage; what a hissing there would be between his ice and this cataract of sulphur. Adieu. I have broken my word and wrote a volume, but my pen was hurried on by the torrent of lava.

P. S. Cumberland himself has just published a lovely book, which will keep cold, though seasoned like his Calypso's potion for Telemachus, *with the hot Hesperian fly* disguised as an *humble* bee, but really a wasp. Like Soame Jennyns' Anodyne too it was intended for *better times.*

There is a very sensible confutation of Dean Milles in the Monthly Review for March, which I never heard

of till yesterday. Happy for him, if he were only confuted.

P.S. I was going to seal my letter when I received yours, which obliges me to add more last words; your conduct and measures were still wiser than I had heard in the very short conversation which I had with Lord John in our *pinchbeck drawing-room.* I approve much your guarding against the late Ministers and their tools, nay, I should not differ with you on shorter Parliaments, I should like five years, and consent to three, never to *annual,* which would be *anarchical.* My great repugnance would be to any alteration of the constitution of the House of Commons. Besides that the present has retrieved its character and that of parliaments. I am rootedly against touching the construction. Considering that we have no sacred law but precedents, if once we should begin to alter foundations, any evil might be copied thence. I do not defend precedents as such, but as they become sacred. If the nation believed that its liberty was maintained by witchcraft, I would not make an act against sorcery. I therefore tell you honestly, that I am sorry the Duke of Richmond is so eager for his Committee, and that I hope it will not succeed. Indeed I am persuaded that it will produce nothing but variety of opinion, but they may create division, which is the great object of the great enemy, but enough of that at present. I am sure of my letters you must be sick, — well I shall be little here; I am going to Strawberry that I may hear no more politics.

Whenever my friends are landed I trouble my head no more about them. I have not seen the Duke of Richmond, or Mr. Conway this week, the rest I do not intend to see again, so I could learn nothing but of camps or gunpowder, which I defy either of them to make me understand or listen to.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, April 10, 1782.

I have sent by this post to Mr. Stonhewer under Mr. Fraser's cover at the Secretary's office, my Essay on Cathedral Music, who will convey it to you after he has read it. You will I trust find your friend Sir John touched with a very light hand, and you will find too a biographical chart on one page, which single page cost me more trouble than twenty plum-puddings would have done, and is an irrefragable confutation of your aspersion concerning my indolence. I know not whether you will give that page its due applause, but if you do not, Kirgate I am sure will, for my printer holds it a master-piece in the typographical way.

On my return hither I found a letter which I cannot help inclosing to you, as it comes from the brother of a wife, who you know was once so very dear to me, and whose memory will ever sit closest to my heart. I feel when I am doing this, that I am doing what I would not do for myself, yet which for her sake, I cannot help doing; the place in question is the store-

keeper of the garrison at Hull, and is I believe reckoned at two hundred a year. All that is said in the letter is I believe strictly true, the old man is upwards of seventy, but having lost his memory, and being naturally of a strong constitution, may hold out many years, as such persons (who are divested of all mental cares) usually do, the young man (who is about forty), was in trade as a wholesale ironmonger in London, and about fourteen years ago, finding his business decline, gave it up before he was necessitated so to do, and retired to take care of his father, this was soon after his sister died; on this account, as her small fortune of two thousand pounds was in the father's hands, I let it remain there, and the family have since enjoyed it, as I never permitted him to pay me any interest, keeping only the son's bond for the principal, that in case of any failure I might save something for his two children. In my will I have cancelled the bond itself, I mention this merely to shew you the state of the family, and how eligible such an exchange would be, could it be procured, for if the father dies, this £2000 will be almost the son's all. His acquaintance with Lord Orford arose, from his seeing him at Hull when his regiment was there quartered. Thus having told my story, I leave it to you whether it may be proper for you to mention it to the Duke of Richmond. I press nothing, and only beg to plead my first motive for mentioning the matter to you, as what I know your own heart will tell you is an excuse. If this friendly application fails, I shall not make (nor indeed have I a

method of making) any other, I will say no more than that I am

yours most truly

W. MASON.

P.S. The post for which I had prepared this letter to go in its return from Sheffield this evening, brought me yours from Worsop, before I had sealed it, I will therefore tell you what great pleasure it gave me to find that you so much approve of our resolutions at the last York Meeting; for my own part, I think that our original idea of an additional number of county members is only defensible on that argument which now leads the administration to introduce fifteen new Peers into the House of Lords. I need enter no more in detail with you than to say that both are meant to throw a weight into the scale of integrity, against its opposite of corruption. Take away venal boroughs from one house, and bishops and Scotch Peers (their votes at least) from the other, and then there will be no occasion either for more knights or more peers; and so ends my catechism.

On reviewing my letter as well as my postscript, I cannot help reflecting with chagrin what an ill return I make you by a sort of petitionary tale about a Storekeeper's place at Hull, in answer to your golden-historico-dramatico-legend (I don't mean lie) of my Lord Earl-Bishop. I was once his Shakespeare or Milton or both, but now, alas, Mister or Monsieur or Signor Sherlock (for I am told he is both French, English and

Italian in print) wears not only my laurels, but has over topt me in the hot-bed of his lordship's friendship, in which, about thirty years ago, I was a very sightly plant; for I take for granted the drama you so delightfully describe is the said abbé's, abbaté's or parson's production: what a falling off were here, did not the alliteration round the period! Pray let me advise you, though you forgot who Mr. Duncombe was, (our county member, whom the Association chose instead of Lascelles) not to forget that when you write to a friend in the country, about new books, to mention their titles at least, and not to call them lovely books, &c. so that one cannot send for them by the carrier. In the case of Cumberland's, this perhaps is excusable, but you served me so about Soame Jennyns, and a hundred more.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

DEAR SIR, Aston, April 11, 1782.

Since I writ yesterday I have seen Mr. Sherman, who brings this to London, but who, at my instance, will not trouble you with any personal application. But I write this by him to rectify two mistakes in my last: 1st. that the place in question is only one hundred a year, and the other, that he has not done his father's duty more than eight years, the former of these it is of the greatest consequence to set right for an obvious

reason, but both proceeded from my own mistake in great haste.

Most truly yours

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, April 13, 1782.

For forty good years I have made it my rule not to ask a favour of any minister, that he might not think he had a claim on my servility, or call me ungrateful if I did not accept his draft; of Mr. Conway when Secretary of State before, and now, I have asked no favour, because I have too good claim on his friendship not to distress him if he could not grant it, or not to interfere with what he might owe to others. I did not fear his expecting any dirt from me; I have as full confidence in the virtue of the Duke of Richmond, and though I have no strong title to solicit him, the moment I received your letter I wrote to his grace and enclosed your brother's letter. As this was yesterday evening, and as I have received no answer, I conclude that he is informing himself of the nature of the office, and has not partiality enough for me, which I approve, to promise me blindly what I ask. I told him that you would not more than I pay the compliment of being obliged to most of his associates; I stated the confidence you had placed in his good intentions, though I avowed that I neither approved of his or your desire of

touching the construction of the House of Commons; and in short if he grants the boon it will be owing to your merit, not to my intercession.

Apropos to the Duke, I can now tell you by the post something I only hinted at; in short you political speculatists have sown such doubts in his very delicate and scrupulous mind, that I wish he does not carry them much further than you would desire. He is so struck with the idea of all men having a right to chuse their representatives, that he is averse to the bill for excluding contractors, those locusts, from the House of Commons. I knew this long ago, and a melancholy advantage he will give to the enemy if he joins with their iniquitous phalanx. Your friend and Archbishop has convened his black colleagues to consult on opposing that most essential bill. None of the bench but St. Asaph and Peterborough were at Lord Rockingham's levee, where I should have concluded they would all have met, but either they are reserved for opposition to all the constitutional, or reforming bills, or have calculated that the life of Cornwallis is worth more than the duration of this ministry, or rather they reserve themselves for Opposition because the odds lie on that side.

I also knew that the Duke of Richmond absented himself from parliament because his friends did not come into the plans, relative to the alterations of parliament; indeed after Mr. Conway's successful motion, the late ministers were on the point of being beaten, the Lord advocate turned the debate and saved them

by urging that Mr. Fox was engaged to support those alterations, which would be so unpalatable to most of the members. I could then only hint these things to you darkly; I mention them to show you, that being on the spot, I saw many inconveniencies arising to the cause from too positive adherence to speculations on which it was impossible to unite the many; and therefere if I have appeared too positive myself, you will excuse me, as I did not act from mere opinions of my own. As *to disunite* is the motto of the enemy, *Union*, must be ours — or — but I doubt the first is much more practicable than the second.

What do you say to that wicked jackanapes Eden! The bomb he threw, and which, though it fell on his own head, may have perverse consequences, is supposed to have been put into his hands by the fiend Loughborough, with whom he was shut up the whole preceding day.

Cumberland's book is called Anecdotes of Spanish Painters. To show he has been in Spain (of which he boasts though with little reason) he spells every name (that is not Spanish) as they do; the Fleming Rubens he calls (to Englishmen) *Pedro Pablo* Rubens and Vitruvius *Viturbio*. Two pages are singularly delectable; one of them was luckily criticised this morning in the Public Advertiser, and saves me the trouble of transcribing; the other is a *chef d'œuvre* of proud puppyism. Speaking of subjection of Spain to the Carthaginians, he says "when Carthage was her mistress it is not easy to conceive a situation more degrading for a noble

people than to bear the yoke of *mercantile* republicans, and do homage at the shop-boards of upstart demagogues;" would not one think it was a Vere or a Percy that wrote this impertinent condolence, and not a little *commis* — he goes on — "Surely it is in human nature *to prefer* the tyranny of the most absolute despot that ever wore a crown to the mercenary and imposing insults of a trader. *Who* would not rather appeal to a *court* than a compting house," a most worthy ejaculation. This in a free commercial country, and from a petty scribe of office! My grandfather, my mother's father, was a Danish timber merchant; an honest sensible whig, and I am very proud of him, as I do believe he would have treated a clerk of Lord Bolinbroke with proper contempt, if he had told him that it was better that all the tradesmen of London should be liable to be sent to the gallies, than that a jack in office should be made to wait in a back-shop. You are mistaken about Mr. Sherlock, who I confess I think has parts, though you and others whose judgments I honour are of a different opinion. I have seen the real author, and had begun a long account of him but laid it aside to answer you on your commission, but I go to Strawberry to morrow and will finish it if I have time, for it is curious. I shall return on Tuesday, when I shall be very happy if I am able to send you a favourable answer about Mr. Sherman.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, April 14, 1782.

I am shocked at myself for having made sport, though innocently, at the tragedy of Lord Russel, as I have since seen the author, who is a poor worthy Irish clergyman, his name, Stratford, aged about five and forty, of great parts, and not a little mad, as Lord Bristol has owned to me. I found Mr. Stratford so modest, so humble, and so ignorant of the world, that I talked to him very frankly, and in the gentlest terms I could use, representing to him the total impossibility of his play being acted in its present state. I said I reckoned it immoral to flatter any author, in a manner to draw him into exposing himself, &c. He allowed all my objections, which I stated; thanked me with the warmest gratitude, and then broke out on the *magnanimity* of Mr. Cumberland, who had condescended to transcribe his whole play, and begun to alter it. As that magnanimous doctor is so rank a tory I was still more surprised.

The poor man told me he had brought his family over, at an expense he could ill afford, to get some of his plays acted, for he has also written four comedies. Methinks my Lord of Bristol-Derry had better have given him some preferment than let him write himself into a jail, as he probably will. I offered to look over one of his comedies; the next morning he brought me the first scene of one, but it is so metaphorical, so un-

grammatical, and he has such a brogue that I did not guess at the meaning of one sentence. I was forced to take the book out of his hand and read it myself, when I found a profusion of wit and ideas, similies and metaphors so strangely coupled together in the most heterogeneous bands, that every sentence would require a commentary, and deserves one, though you may judge thence how unfit for the stage. He has no notion of simplicity, character, or nature; nor I believe of comedy itself, for he owned that he had never looked into Congreve or Vanburgh; but the strange part of all is that in the whole scene there is scarce a verb! all consists of metaphors in apposition and allusions in hints. He laughed when I showed him that there was nothing but substantives and adjectives. Besides these works, he has a poem written long ago in blank verse, on the battle of Fontenoy, in nine cantos. In this he has not discarded one of the eight parts of speech; there are sublime passages, but little invention or novelty, at least in the specimen that I have seen; and the images are too fierce. This he is going to publish by subscription for present subsistence, and I shall toil to raise some money for him: He formerly printed a translation of the first book of Milton into Greek, and the university of Dublin supervised it for him. He repeated some of the lines to the Bishop of St. Asaph in my room, who admired them, and he quoted Hebrew as glibly; and there the Bishop understood him no more than I did his Greek, which I have quite forgotten. The Duke of Devonshire has got his comedy, and I am

sorely afraid the poor man's madness will be a jest instead of a matter of compassion, but I shall at least endeavour to make them pay for laughing at a man that ought to be respected. He cannot bear the name of Johnson for his paltry acrimony against Milton; in short he is a whig to the marrow.

Last night before I came out of town, I was at a kind of pastoral opera written by Lady Craven, and acted prettily by her own and other children: you will scold me again for not telling you the title, but in truth I forgot to ask it. There was imagination in it, but not enough to carry off five acts. The Chancellor was there *en titre d'office* not as head of the law, but as cicisbeo to the authoress, his countenance is so villainous that he looked more like assassin to the Husband. Lady Harcourt said he wanted nothing but a red coat and a black wig to resemble the murderers in Macbeth. The late premier consoles himself with bon mots. On Tuesday in the House of Commons he sat opposite to the Treasury-bench; somebody said, "I see my Lord you have taken your place," he replied, "yes a place for life." It was better what he said on the first Gazette of the new Administration, "I was abused for lying Gazettes, but there are more lies in this one than in all mine — yesterday his Majesty *was pleased* to appoint the Marquis of Rockingham, the Duke of Richmond, Mr. Charles Fox, &c., &c., &c." It was not a bad answer of Burke to one of the late gang who sneered at Lord Effingham's kissing hands, "yes and

he is in the very coat in which he was killed at the riots."

I reserve the rest of my paper for the Duke of Richmond's answer, which I hope to find favourable — on Tuesday.

Tuesday Evening.

I am mortified, for I am come to town and have found neither letter nor message from the Duke! however, I cannot interpret it ill — for surely *No* is easily said. Still I am disappointed, for when one breaks a good resolution, one should like to have been obliged immediately, and enabled to notify the favour directly to the person for whom one solicits, at least, I had set my heart on such a proceeding towards you. I found the note you sent me by Mr. Sherman, I had not named the value of the place, so it is not necessary to contradict it, nor will I stoop to lessen the worth of what I asked, for as I had great pleasure in breaking my resolution to oblige you, I will not haggle to obtain half of what I thought I asked. I did not hesitate when I thought it double, but it is plain I am not used to be solicitous, when I do not like the least delay, which I think blasts a favour.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, April 22, 1782.

You will no doubt have guessed the reason why you have not heard from me again on the subject of the commission you gave me. Had I received a favourable answer I should have been happy to have told you so instantly. Even a refusal I should not have concealed. The truth is no answer at all has been vouchsafed; you know me, too well I believe, to be surprised at my not applying again: and I flatter myself that you would have been displeased if I had. Nay do not laugh at me for having imagined at my age that there was one man in whom I could place full confidence, who I could suppose would be the same in power as when out, still I will be just. Perhaps vanity made me mistake civilities for friendship. Perhaps I presumed too much; and though I protest I thought I was not only obliging you but serving the person I solicited by putting it into his power to oblige *you*, it is very possible that I had no right to ask even so small a favour, and so well founded. I stand corrected, I shall never be so arrogant again. Nay unless I see that person changed in *essentials*, I will not, because he has had no attention for me, conclude that his virtue is shaken by such tinsel trappings as he has attained, and which being so common to the most worthless of his rank, can surely not be flattering to the individual. At least I, who have more pride than most men, should never be proud

of what are the appendages to birth and rank, and imply no merit in one's self.

For the trial I have made, be assured I do not repent it, whatever opens one's eyes is useful. It is good to have one's vanity reprimanded, nor can I be sorry to have shown you how zealous I was to oblige *you*, though by the manner in which I feel the rebuff, you may judge how little I am accustomed to ask favours, so little, that this slight will account to you for my not being able to tell you any thing more than you may see in the newspapers. I should not have *haunted* the new Ministers — *now* I would as soon step into a cave of scorpions, or connect with the late Ministers. My principles will not alter, whether I am neglected or whether they who professed the same abandon them, nor, unless they do, will I think they do. They have a difficult part to act, and nothing yet promises them any success, so deeply had the last wretches plunged us. The Dutch are haughty, obstinate, or too much in the power of France. Ireland adheres to its point. The combined squadrons of the three hostile nations will amount to fourscore sail in the Channel; ours but to twenty-seven. I do not think that twenty-seven ought to beat eighty, because I concluded I had a claim on one who had long professed great regard for me; nor do I hold the new Ministers accountable for the impotence of a nation that had been made eunuch by their predecessors. If I knew where to find Mr. Sherman, I would have sent and begged him not to lose his time in town, or if he can find better interest

than my own I should be happy to have him succeed. If I were not afraid of mistaking my own wounded pride for his hardship, I should say he was ill treated; but the first is so natural that I must be on my guard against myself: nor will I be unjust because I have duped myself which I do believe I did in construing great civilities into *tacit* professions, and in thinking the person in question loved me because I was an enthusiast to his virtues. Do not therefore let my blunder prevent Mr. Sherman from seeking better interest.

Mr. Stonhewer has lent me (am I not to have one myself of) your Essay on Church Music. I was diverted by the only passage I understand the *Quavers on the generation of the Patriarchs.* Sir John Hawkins must have more sense or sensibility than I have if he is hurt by a single word. I thank you for its not being more striking. He came in an hour ago just as I was finishing it and I had a mind to show it to him, but I did not. You will not dislike the *sayings* of the time in lieu of the politics; the new Administration is called the *Regency,* as they govern in the place of the King. Lord Effingham from his strange figure and dress and his two Staffs, as Deputy Earl Marshal and Treasurer of the Household, is called *the Devil on two Sticks.* I look on these sarcasms as buds of a new opposition. Adieu!

P. S. I forgot to tell you that lately Dr. Percy the new Bishop of Dromore, told me or rather proved to

me a curious anecdote; you know Professor Ferguson denied positively in print that a Highland Lad of his House, and in presence of Dr. Blair recited some of the pretended poems of Ossian in Erse, which I think Dr. Blair has also denied. Dr. Percy has lately found I believe on coming to town two letters from Blair, which he had forgotten about Lord Algernon Percy's board in Ferguson's house; and in both he mentions the fact of the lad's recitation in Ferguson's house and presence. I saw these letters myself and so did Lord Ossory, the Bishop of St. Asaph, and one or two other persons who were with me. "Well said I, Mr. Dean, and will you not print these letters to take off the accusation of falsehood from yourself?" He seemed afraid to do so. This timidity sets those Scotch impostors and their cabal in a still worse light than their forgeries, as it shows their persecution of all who oppose them.

"

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, April 24, 1782.

I am as much obliged to you as if your application had met with immediate success, but I will not yet think that it has failed, and am only sorry that the delay gives you so much anxiety and fills your imagination with such uncomfortable surmises, for my own part when I consider that the favour which you asked on my part required no immediate answer, and that if

done perhaps a year hence may be done in good time: as it was not to fill a vacancy, but only on a resignation to receive another officer, I can easily impute it to the Duke's more pressing concerns. I have however written to Mr. Sherman to use other interest which I know he has, and by so doing perhaps put your better interest more speedily in effect.

I shall to morrow write you a longer letter by a private hand, which will shew you that I on my part am always ready to obey your requests, even though in so doing I incur danger of falling into a poetical diarrhœa, therefore till to morrow Adio.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, April 25, 1782.

You cannot have a present, because no persons are to have that favour but such persons as the author is not acquainted with. You must therefore watch the papers for a pamphlet with this title, "The Dean and the Squire, a Political Eclogue, by the Author of the H. Epistle, &c." But who say you is the Dean? not Dean Milles, nor yet Dean Dampier, no, who but Dean Tucker; whose head I can tell you jowls very musically against Squire Jennyns. You have here the whole of my secret and I trust will keep it so far as the secret should be kept. Lord Harcourt and a few such may be entrusted.

I own I have as little hopes of the present ministry's

duration as you can have, that wrong-headed fellow Burke will spoil all with his nerves and his farcical grimace. There is not a farmer in my parish but when he reads his speech about the Message to the House, but will laugh him to scorn for his absurdity. I have written so much these last four days, in which all that I have now done was began and completed, that my fingers feel tired.

Yours very faithfully

W. MASON.

It rains here incessantly and the floods are excessive, if it does so with you I hope it will drown all your caterpillars, we want it not for that purpose.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

" Berkeley Square, April 27, 1782.

You was in the right in your patience and I extremely in the wrong in losing mine, yet to you alone am I excusable for I was so eager to serve you in so slight and yet so reasonable a request, that I could not bear to wait even a few days for it. I met the Duke last night at Lady Ailesbury's; he came up to me with earnestness, begged my pardon for not having answered my letter, but had called twice at my house when I was out of town, which I had not heard. He told me the suit should be granted, but he had staid to enquire whether Mr. Sherman had executed the business well

for his father. Well, I am overjoyed on your account, but what do you think is the consequence,—that I never will ask any favour again. I see I am too proud; I felt the appearance of neglect too fiercely, and never, never will I do my few friends the injury of suspecting them wrongfully. My nature is too hasty for the commerce of the world, and is not corrected by such long acquaintance with it. I knew myself so far that for many years I have dealt little with mankind, and what is the event? why here am I with all the warmth of a boy! oh I am ashamed of myself! I will go to Strawberry to morrow for three days and humble myself to the dust.

I have not received what you may trust I long for, but I suppose a private *hand* does not travel so fast as the post. The Archæologic Epistle has not a gainsayer. Governor Pownall told me as a *secret* discovery he had made that it is certainly by the author of the Heroic Epistle. I have just received a letter from Scotland in which the writer, Lord Buchan, cites the former with high complacency. I have inundated you lately with so many quires that I shall not add a word to this.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

May 7, 1782.

If I did not know that you can do just what you will and can write in any and all styles, I should not

have expected that you could couch the subtilties of metaphysics in short verse. Nay you have done so too well, for I doubt whether the general run of readers and Bishops will understand your double edged irony, it is so closely reasoned. I must have the second part too, for it is incompleat, nor have you lashed the most offensive parts of the Squire's Book, especially the pages 145 and 147. The preface and notes are excellent too, and I thank you particularly for Butler's niche. The certificate will puzzle and perplex. One Bains I hear, is now thought the author of the Archæologic Epistle. I am persuaded that there will be a controversy, and that some will maintain that the one is by the Heroic Epistle Writer, and others that the Squire and Dean is, while many will go on believing that the latter Dean is Milles, though they do not know how. I wish Fresnoy was ready to increase the perplexity.

The papers will tell you that confusion is already set on foot in the House of Lords. There is one too who urges on economy in order to drive the new Ministers to make more enemies, and so deprive them of the means of making friends. I do not believe he will find much difficulty in getting rid of most of them. That perhaps would be fortunate should it happen soon, while they are in the bloom of their popularity, and before they have lost none of it and *before they quarrel amongst themselves,* but the last is most likely to arrive first. My own opinion is that there will be great confusion before any permanent settlement. The

present system was not intended nor is constituted to last, nor have I a higher idea of the abilities of those who I believe are meant to succeed. The old party will recover their spirits every day, with pretty near one principle of action, while the new will split into petty divisions, and run races of popularity with each other. Perhaps after some struggles and some more revolutions, the whole will subside into the two ancient divisions under the colours of prerogative and liberty: but these may be only my conjectures or visions, and therefore I will tire you with no more of them. A master genius may give a different turn to the whole, but as yet there are so many chiefs, and so few fit to be so, that any system will be lame and hobbling for some time. In truth I discern but one capable of being the leader. I will not name him, lest you and I should not agree. Adieu.

P.S. Lady Laura and Lord Chewton were married two days ago. You talk of bad weather in your last, it has lasted here to this instant: there is not a leaf big enough to cover a caterpillar. But we do not seem likely to want any shade. I suppose they who affect to like it, which they will if it is not to be had, will build conservatories to bring their trees forward, to which there will be a double temptation, as coals are risen to enormous price, and though Ministers must court popularity by economy, economy is not a jot more in fashion even amongst the people. Not a beggar's civil list but is two or three quarters in

arrear: and give the King his due, I question whether he is half so much in debt in proportion as the lowest of his tradesmen.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, May 8; 1782.

I have thought proper not to break in upon your *petite carême* or Penitentiary three days at Strawberry, with my repetition of thanks which I sincerely offer you for the pains and interest you have taken in the affair I petitioned you upon. You say that you will never ask a Ministerial favour again and you say well. I, on my part hope, I shall say will, for I am sure I shall say it truly, that I will never solicit you to do so, except for the Deanery of Gloucester for myself, when the present Dean shall be made a Bishop, this is my only exception and I hope you will admit it to be a reasonable one.

You have by this time I suppose, received what I sent by a private hand. I would wish you to read spirituel for spiritual in page 111, and to insert this parenthesis between l. 210 and 211.

> (Unless, by Justice to be mumbled
> He's forced to stay like Nabob Rumbold.)

This will appear in the second Edition, with an apology for the broadness of some of the jests in imitation of the author of the Walloons.

I hope you will tell me all that you hear (worth hearing) on this occasion, and that you will believe me to be

your much obliged and grateful servant.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, May 18, 1782.

The one Baines whom you mentioned in your last but one, is an ingenious young Yorkshire man, a student in Gray's Inn, who could not well conceal himself on a prior occasion, because it was absolutely necessary he should revise the press, but in the latter he disguised himself *en militaire* and managed the matter excellently. I have heard from him lately, and he wants much to know whether that ballad of the Duke of Wharton's which you have quoted in your noble Authors, Vol. II. p. 131.

The Duke he drew out half his sword
The Guard drew out the rest—

be in print or in MS., if in print, where he can find it. I should be much obliged to you, if you will give him a single line of intelligence on this matter, his address is to John Baines, Esq., No. 11 Gray's Inn, (by the penny post) I know not why he wants it, but I wish to oblige him as he has been very useful to me, and may be more so.

I sent up by the last post to my friend Mr. H. Duncombe, a grave ode to Mr. W. Pitt, a kind of Companion to my last to the naval officers of Great Britain, which, if he thinks it will be well timed, is to be printed by Dodsley immediately, this will serve to puzzle perhaps better than Fresnoy was he ready to make his appearance, which he will not be able to do till next winter, for our York press works sure but slowly. But I remember you ask'd me before who is 'Mr. Duncombe? Mr. Duncombe, Sir, is our County member, made such by our Yorkshire Association, when we turned out Lascelles. Do not, however, be afraid that this ode turns much on our principles, a little indeed it does, but there is a fling in it at the Protesters, Bathurst, Archbishop of York, Chandos, Paget, against the Bill for providing for Lord Chatham's son, which I think will lead you to excuse the other.

Pray make my most cordial congratulations to Lady Chewton, and deliver her this message verbatim —

"That if I was not too old and too snuffey I should certainly attempt writing her Epithalamium."

If your caterpillars are not drowned ere this, they certainly are of the otter genus, for it is here never fair weather for a quarter of an hour.

You mentioned in a former letter that you thought I had treated your friend Sir John Hawkins mighty civilly. No matter for that; I dare say, if he ever reads my Cathedral Essay, he will answer it, he is much more to be dreaded as a contraversialist than any two

Deans and a Squire, and a Dr. Johnson, and a whole bench of Bishops, into the bargain.

Yours most truly

W. MASON.

I hope you have made my most respectful acknowledgements to the Duke of Richmond, which are equally due to him from me, whether Mr. Sherman be found eligible or not.

P.S. May 22nd.

This was to have gone by the last post on Sunday, but was forgot to be sent, since then I have had a letter from Mr. Sherman, who has told me that by your being so obliging as to forward his father's petition by General Conway to the Duke, the affair was settled in his favour. He is very grateful and I am, as I ought to be, as much so to you, the General and the Duke. But he tells me also, that when he called at your door you could not see him, being ill of a fever. I hope in God this was even less than a fevrette, a fever I hope of David's coinage, as an honest porter has a right to do on occasion; however, I wish to hear soon that you are really well even without a recovery.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, May 25, 1782.

My illness was indeed not an excuse left with the

porter to avoid visits but a very serious one, the consequences of which are not yet gone. I caught a violent cold, which fell on my breast and obliged me to be bloodied two days together. In course the bleedings brought the gout and here I am on my couch with both left hand and foot in flannel. I was at the worst when I wished to see Mr. Sherman, but I am content that he and you are so. My cold is an epidemic one; the Duchess and all my nieces are laid up by it. Lady Chewton has been presented, but looked sadly, having been bloodied the day before.

As I have the use of but one hand and am reduced very low, I can merely answer your paragraph. I did write a few lines last night to Mr. Baines that *you* might lose no merit with him, but I could give him no satisfaction. I have utterly forgot every circumstance relative to that ballad. Probably as I lived in that century, I retained the lines by memory, but whether I did or not I cannot tell now.

I have looked but do not see your new Ode advertised. I do not care what it is about, I dare to say I shall like it. My present object is to be amused, which few but you can compass. For politics, I am satisfied that the Royalists are routed, and at least they must fight their way back before they can do more positive mischief. I cannot look forwards to what I may not see. I have loved old Lady England very disinterestedly till I am sixty-five. She has now got younger and abler gallants, and must beg she will dispense with my troubling my head any more with

her affairs. It is prudent for old folks to take the opportunity of any new Era for breaking off instead of tapping every new generation one after another.

They say there is another pacquet of good news come this morning and that Sir Samuel Hood has taken two or three more Men of War. It is surely very pleasant that now one can dare to be glad of success! Three months ago a victory made one expect to be sent to the Bastile, still it is fortunate that Rodney and Hood cannot march their fleet to the door of the House of Commons — if they could!—

After Dinner.

The codicil to our victory is true. Hood has taken an eighty and seventy-four, two frigates and a store-ship, all chuck-full of cannon, masts, &c. destined to equip their fleet for the conquest of Jamaica. Rodney is made an English and Hood an Irish Peer. Drake a Baronet and Jervas a Knight of the Bath, but all I doubt will not compensate the unlucky recall! for you may be sure if the individuals would be soothed, the faction will not.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, June 2, 1782.

I am sorry your illness was real, but hope your next will tell me that the gout which followed it, has entirely left you.

I received a letter the last post from Lord Harcourt, who speaks of certain obligations he has lately received from you in a very ænigmatical yet very grateful manner, and as I can guess at gratitude better than I can at a riddle, and believe it in this case to be sincere I find myself inclined to tell you so. Had he been a Bishop instead of an Earl, I should have had a reason, *a fortiori* for so doing, but as it is, it is surely not so common a thing as not to deserve noticing.

That curmugeon Dodsley has I find printed my Ode in a gigantic type to swell it out to the price of a shilling, though I ordered it to be printed exactly like my former to the Naval Officers, it makes it look a mere catchpenny; if ever I print any such little matters again, I am resolved to do them at my own expense and give them to a few friends, from whom the Chronicles and Magazines may steal them.

I find by the papers he has reprinted your Anecdotes and made them as much too cheap as my Ode is too dear, but I suppose you interfered in that matter.

I am told that I have had the honour to have my Life printed, not indeed by Dr. Johnson, but I fancy by a Biographer of the same stamp, for he says I am a republican. If you have the curiosity to read it, I am told it is in a book called a Companion to the Theatre. You see I am at a sad loss for a topic to write about when I mention such a trifle. I will therefore conclude with thanking you for sending your *no* intelligence, which yet was your best intelligence to

Mr. Baines about the Ballad he was in search for. Believe me, dear Sir,

yours most heartily

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, June 4, 1782.

You are very kind, especially as my gout was not worth the inquiry, being only a codicil to the influenza. I have walked about the room to-day and shall air to-morrow.

I like the colouring of your Ode much and do not dislike any part of it as you expected; you shall not be made a property of by any Printer another time, as my press shall be at your command, unless for any thing political; this is not from apprehension of *your* politics, but when I first set up the press, there was a notion that it was intended for that use; on which I vowed and declared it never should be employed either in politics or satire: and I kept so strictly to that resolution, that when I published my defence of General Conway, I had it printed by Almon, though I avowed it.

The cheap edition of my Anecdotes of Painting is entirely my own direction, and calculated chiefly for the use of Artists, in order to which I omitted the Prints to reduce the price. I had another view too, as there have been but few copies of my editions, Col-

lectors (not readers) have pushed their price to an extravagant height. I cannot help their being such fools: but I determined that at least people should not give more for my writings than they are worth, unless they chose it.

I will read the imaginary Life of Mr. Mason, though I seldom do read the romances of the day.

You will be amazed when you hear what Lord Harcourt calls an obligation from me. That is, that he should think it so,—you will not be surprised that when he does think so, his excellent heart should overflow. There are reasons why neither he nor I can write it.

We have at last acquired an ally! the *new* kingdom of Ireland have voted us an assistance of twenty thousand seamen. How will Bates or Macpherson continue to ascribe *this* to the late miscreants! They have voted Mr. Grattan £10,000 for a house, and £40,000 more to purchase for him and his descendants an estate of £2000 a year.

Have you seen Bishop Newton's Life? I have only in a Review, you may perhaps think it was drawn up by his washerwoman; but it is more probable *mangled* (*v.* the Laundress's Vocabulary; I do not mean *maimed*) by Lord Mansfield himself; at least he had the MS. for some weeks in his possession. It is a most perfect sample of Episcopal and Justiciary Biography, &c.

Prelates will bow and bless the harpy feast.

Stonhewer has been very ill of the Influenza and Palgrave a little, but we have had two dry days after fifty-three of rain, and begin to wear our rainbow again. Adieu.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

June 6, 1782.

Postscript to my last.

The Archbishop of Canterbury being confined by the gout, the Cardinal of York made the Speech on the Birthday at the head of the Sacred College. He gloried in being admitted to that honour, he spoke with that truth which was their profession, and prayed for the head of the Church in their public and *secret* devotions. He condoled with his Majesty on many disagreeable things that he had been forced to undergo and must have felt, but he could take upon himself to assure him that he would not be deserted.

N. B. I wrote this down immediately, as it was repeated to me by one of the Bench who heard it. I asked whether My Lord of Canterbury had the gout in his head or stomach, for such a pound of incense looks as if he was dangerously ill. Bishop Hurd must double the dose to Mrs. Hagerdorn *in his secret devotions.*

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, June 25, 1782.

I find there is a correspondence commenced between you and Mr. Hayley by the Parnassus Poet. I did not know you were acquainted; I suppose you met at Calliope's: if you love incense, he has fumigated you like a flitch of bacon, however, I hope in the Lord Phœbus that you will not take his advice any more than Pope did that of such another sing-song warbler Lord Lyttelton; nor be persuaded to write an Epic poem, that most senseless of all the species of poetic composition and which pedants call the *chef d'œuvre* of the human mind; well, you may frown, as in duty bound, yet I shall say what I list. Epic poetry is the art of being as long as possible in telling an uninteresting story: and an Epic poem is a mixture of history without truth and of romance without imagination. We are well off when from that *mesalliance* there spring some bastards called Episodes, that are lucky enough to resemble their romantic mother, more than their solemn father. So far from Epic poetry being at the head of composition, I am persuaded that the reason why so exceedingly few have succeeded, is from the absurdity of the species. When nothing has been impossible to genius in every other walk, why has every body failed in this but the inventor Homer? You will stare, but what are the rest? Virgil with every beauty of expression and harmony that can be conceived has ac-

complished but an insipid imitation. His Hero is a nullity, like Mellefont and the virtuous characters of every comedy, and some of his incidents as the Harpies and the ships turned to Nymphs, as silly as Mother Goose's tales. Milton, all imagination, and a thousand times more sublime and spirited, has produced a monster. Lucan, who often says more in half a line than Virgil in a whole book, was lost in bombast if he talked for thirty lines together. Claudian and Statius had all his fustian with none of his quintessence. Camoens had more true grandeur than they, but with grosser faults. Dante was extravagant, absurd, disgusting, in short a Methodist Parson in Bedlam. Ariosto, was a more agreeable Amadis de Gaul, and Spencer, John Bunyan in rhyme. Tasso wearies one with their insuperable crime of stanza and by a thousand puerilities that are the very opposite of that dull dignity which is demanded for Epic: and Voltaire who retained his good sense in heroics, lost his spirit and fire in them. In short Epic poetry is like what it first celebrated, the heroes of a world that knew nothing better than courage and conquest. It is not suited to an improved and polished state of things. It has continued to degenerate from the founder of the family, and happily expired in the last bastard of the race Ossian.

Still as Mr. Hayley has allowed such a latitude to heroic poesy as to admit the Lutrin, the Dispensary, and the Dunciad as Epic poems, I can forgive a man

who recommends to a friend to pen a tragedy, when he will accept of the Way of the World as one.

For Mr. Hayley himself, though he chaunts in good tune, and has now and then pretty lines amongst several both prosaic and obscure, he has, I think no genius, no fire and not a grain of *originality,* the first of merits (in my eyes) in these latter ages, and a more certain mark of genius than in the infancy of the world, when no ground was broken, nor even, in the sportsman's phrase *foiled.* It is that originality that I admire in your Heroic Epistle and in your genuine style, which I trust you will not quit to satisfy the impartial Mr. Hayley (who though a good patriot equally cherishes Janizaries)

> That to you *do not belong*
> *The beauties of envenomed song.*

For writing an Epic poem, it would be as wise to set about copying Noah's Ark, if Mons. de Buffon should beg you to build a Menagerie for a couple of every living creatures upon earth, when there is no longer any danger of a general inundation.

I doubt your new friend will write his readers and his own reputation to death; every poem has a train of prose as long as Cheapside, with a vast parade of reading that would be less dear if it had any novelty or vivacity to recommend it. I know as little new as he, except that Lord Rockingham is very ill. I believe not without danger, should he fail, there would be a new scene indeed! Adieu!

P. S. I find I have said above, every living *creatures* is not that bad English? and if it is, is not it better — than *a couple of every living creature?*

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, July 1, 1782.

I can tell you but one word, but that is a momentous one. Lord Rockingham died at one o'clock at noon to-day. It is concluded that Lord Shelburn will succeed him and the American War revive, and many of its authors, you may be sure of all, if *Starvation* is sent for from Edinburgh.

I did not expect the new administration to be long-lived, but it was not of a natural death that I thought it would die.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, July 2, 1782.

Don't be afraid, I will give you my Bible oath if you demand it, that I will never write an Epic Poem, but "will stop my ears like the deaf adder to the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely," which by the way I do not think he does, for where is the wisdom in giving one an analysis of forty pages of a Spanish Poem, which analysis proves that it must of necessity be the dullest and foolishest of them all. However,

to answer the polite letter which accompanied Mr. Hayley's work, I assure you cost me more pains than the planning an Epic Poem would have done. The difficulty arose chiefly from my having resolved previously not to say one syllable on the subject, and that because I thought precisely as ill of it as you do.

I have at last seen Bishop Newton's Life, 'tis exactly the same sort of prate which I used to hear with so much disgust at the Chaplain's table. 'Tis as you say, "a Mirror of Episcopal Biography:"—

> He's Knight of the Shire and represents them all,

There was a Bishop I think it was Sprat who thanked God that though he was not educated at Westminster yet he became a Bishop. I on the contrary would not have been educated there for the best pair of Lawn Sleeves in the Kingdom. But *de gustibus non est disputandum.*

I have seen lately an extract of a letter from the poetess Miss Seward, whom Mr. Hayley praises so much in one of his Epistles, "she lays the Archæologic Epistle roundly at my door and praises it highly," but says, "Mr. Hayley has his doubts about the author."

Who shall decide when (such) Doctors disagree? I have been waiting here above a week for a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Weddel, who are detained in town by Lord Rockingham's illness. Had it not been for this I believe I should have come through London to

Oxfordshire, but as I now find Lord Harcourt has got to Nuneham, I shall cross the country to-morrow by Birmingham, see Hagley and Mr. Shenston's, and as I travel with my own horses, not reach Nuneham till Saturday or Sunday. From him I mean to make you a visit at Strawberry when you are really settled there, unless you have promised to visit him in Oxfordshire, this I shall know in our correspondence which will now be nearer and speedier.

Your most obliged and faithful servant

W. MASON.

I have had a letter from Mr. Sherman whose business is now compleatly settled, full of gratitude to you and the Duke of Richmond. What will become of us if Lord Rockingham dies?

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Monday, July 8, 1782.

I wish you did come to town, for how is it possible to fold up chaos in a letter? nay how can one relate and not have an opinion? I certainly have one, but it is more decided on the colour of dislike than of that of satisfaction. One can scarce avoid retrospect or help saying how the worst might have been prevented, but I have not time to look back even ten days. I will go no farther than last Saturday, when to be sure a fraction of an aristocracy gave itself as ridiculous airs as ever

impertinence did. A meeting of the late Marquis's mutes was summoned at Lord Fitzwilliam's, and it was hoped that all present would swear allegiance to the urn of the departed, which was proclaimed to contain all that was precious in our country. The Duke of Richmond was impious enough to think peace with America preferable to those holy cinders, though they are said to contain and to be able to convey a right of transmitting the sceptre and purse of this nation to whom they pleased, or Lord John should please; and his Lordship pleased that the Duke of Portland should be the ostensible and Mr. Fox the real monarch of the Whigs, and Mr. Fox was of the same opinion; not all the rest were. The Lords Berkeley, Craven and De Ferrars presumed to dissent, and Lord Temple loudly; so nothing excepting Fox and Burke remained in the crucible, but the *caput mortuum*. I hope we shall have a codicil to Magna Charta produced, for we are certainly to have a new War of the Barons, a struggle between the King and some great Peers in which the people are to go for nothing.

Don't imagine from what I have been saying, that I am delighted on the other side; no my good friend I am a true Englishman, and am much more easily dissatisfied than pleased. I dislike the new dish that is served up, and shall taste but a few of the old ingredients that are tossed up again, and shall have no stomach at all to the older sauces that will come upon table again, and for which the new removes have made room.

Well! America and Ireland have had the sense and spirit to assert themselves; that is great comfort, England, alias Nova Scotia, little deserves freedom.

I knew nothing certainly of the intended distribution of places. Mr. Pitt and Lord Temple I believe are to be Secretaries of State.

At this moment perhaps Lord Howe may be fighting the combined Squadrons, who could not know that he had above fifteen ships, and he undoubtedly has twenty-three to their twenty-eight or thirty, and five three deckers to their one, besides the flower of the ocean. We have a better chance by seamen than by politicians. *O Neptune, ora pro nobis!*

I am rejoiced that you do not intend to answer Mr. Hayley in heroics. Since gunpowder was invented and heroic virtue was out of fashion, and Circe and Calypso and Armida have left no natural children to inveigle a stray adventurer, whom the gods used to be so good as to assist in seeking his fortune, and help him into mishaps in order to get him out, I see no materials for making anew an old thing called an Epic poem. Even demigods have intermarried till their race are become downright *mestises*; (I forget the mungrel shades in the colonies,) and have little of ethereal clay left in their composition; I mean those half-divinities whom antiquity called patriots, and the moderns, Russels and Sidneys. I could tell you some tales that would make your hair stand on end instead of dipping you in Castalia, but you may trust the new

parties for not letting you remain in ignorance; they have mutual tales to tell believe me.

Lord Harcourt, by a letter I have received to day says, you are sitting on a rafter and dining out of a hod of mortar; no matter, you are at Nuneham and can stroll about Elysium. Whenever you are tired of it, you will be gladly received at Strawberry, and will find a saucer of hautboys for your dinner. Pray settle the plan for the castle, and bring the measurement of the windows that we may fit the painted glass to them, and above all, torment Lady Harcourt to send me her poems that I may begin printing. I shall be gathered to Caxton and my ancestors if she does not make haste. Adieu.

P. S. I was going to seal my letter when good old Lord George Cavendish came in. We talked over very coolly the new schism; I told him fairly that I wished they would, as they had united with Lord Shelburne, have borne with him for three months, entering what caveat or protest they pleased against his continuance, till the peace with America was concluded, Ireland settled, alliances concluded on the Continent, and perhaps reconciliation with Holland; and I added "My dear Lord, don't you think that this new dissention will be heard with transport in France?" he answered "Undoubtedly." I was answered. I put the same question this morning to Mr. Fox — he replied "Oh it will do a great deal of mischief."— Judge.

To morrow we shall hear Mr. Fox's reasons for his

resignation. Lord George owned to me that there might be reasons that could *not* be given; I said "my Lord, will worse reasons satisfy the country."

The most certain thing that will happen is a torrent of abuse on the Duke of Richmond, Lord Shelburne, and Mr. Fox; so malignity at least will have its Saturnalia. The coarsest waters of the kennel will be thrown on the two former, but by what I hear as yet, there will be ten buckets for one emptied on the latter; and yet the most stinking may be diffused the widest.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, July 10, 1782.

Dont be frightened: I do not intend to write to you every day, I shall rusticate myself on Friday, and then you will hear little of me more. Now I am not going to tell you the new arrangements, for General Conway forgets them as fast as he hears them. Yet they may be made, and you will learn them from the new Writs.

My business is to give you a sketch of yesterday; it was a curious debate opened by a motion of inquiry on a thumping pension for life to Colonel Barré signed by Lord Rockingham, Lord Althorpe and Fred. Montagu, and defended by the two last, Lord John and Grenville. This was one of the tales I reserved — There is another parallel about Burke but not a quarter so heavy. The debate soon wandered to the resignations. Charles Fox shone but did not dazzle for

his plea was very flimzy,—his suspicion of Lord Shelburne. He attacked General Conway too and (which I think was a high compliment) called him *an innocent*, who knew nothing, thought nothing of men, but looked to measures, and had wrought great good and great evil. Conway avowed that he did look only to measures, not men, and produced his political creed reduced to the four articles on which the last brief Administration had come into power, viz.—The reduction of the power of the Crown. Public economy, the independence of America and that of Ireland; by these tests he desired to be tried and if he abandoned them to be condemned, would the orders of the House permit it, he would leave the paper from which he spoke on the table. Mr. Fox not only declared that he regarded men, not measures, but you will laugh — insisted that the nation calls for the Duke of Portland. The nation to be sure may call *odd men*, but certainly did not call for his Grace, who till this nomination to Ireland, scarce an hundred men knew to exist. He has lived in ducal dudgeon with half a dozen toad-eaters secluded from mankind behind the ramparts of Burlington wall, and overwhelmed by debts without a visible expence of two thousand pounds a year: It is very entertaining that two or three great families should persuade themselves that they have an hereditary and exclusive right of giving us a head without a tongue, nor is it less burlesque to see a fraction of an aristocracy demanding preheminence without one speaker in the House of Lords but — Lord Derby.

They will receive another blow as sensible as any they have experienced; Sir George Saville disapproves their proud retreat.

If yesterday was not propitious to the renewed opposition, it was not more flattering to the person of the new premier, who was rudely handled, and defended by a Sir William Wake alone, of whom I never heard before. Burke threw a whole basket of invectives on him collected from the Roman history down to Mother Goose's tales. The voice of the town however does not hail Mr. Fox, and yet I question whether Lord Shelburne will not soon be the more unpopular.

I have heard this morning though from no absolute authority that Lord Howe is returned to St. Helen's, declaring he had found the combined fleets too strong to be attacked yet, though he has but twenty four ships, and they thirty, it was yesterday expected that we should hear he had fought, and was victorious. I do not at all know how this is to be taken, that is in what light it is to be interpreted with regard to Lord Keppel, for that will be the consideration on both sides and not the measure or manœuvre. The nation's good will be pretended, and neither side will think of it, except Mr. Conway — adieu: I am impatient to be gone; all is barefaced faction; ambition and interest have cut away their vizors or sold them *parlous* dear. Both sides are alike: one cannot value either. Whenever the nation gets an advantage, it is like a half-gnawed bone tossed to a dog under the table: —

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Nuneham, July 14, 1782.

A thousand thanks to you for your frequent intelligence concerning this strange revolution; concerning which also I can make no comment at present, but what you have done, nor do I suppose I shall be able to make up my own mind about it of some time. Indeed if it be true that Jenkinson has been closeted, as the papers tell us, and if in consequence of that he comes into any ostensible office, I shall not wait for the advent of *Starvation* from Edinburgh to settle my judgment; I shall then look upon the Butæan system as fully restored, and I shall pity Mr. Conway, the Duke of Richmond and Mr. William Pitt as three very honest dupes. But at present I will hope better things, and console myself with thinking that though the nation will have lost much by losing certain honest men amongst the late seceders from the administration, it may yet finally be a gainer by having got quit of the absurdity of one [*Lord J. C.*] whose influence I trust now can be nothing, since he might perforce become the subaltern of Charles Fox, in whom I trust he will not find the implicit acquiescence of his late leader now departed.

I have brought with me hither a precious depot, which at my earnest solicitation you intrusted me with at York, *videlicet* Doctoure Mylles' Edition of Rowley, and this I shall send you by the first safe hand. I

shall also if you please return you your notes on certain poems, that they may be increased at your leisure if you so chuse; though I shall do this with some reluctance, fearing a little, lest by hoping for more, I may lose what I have.

We are here in a most chaotic state; and dine as if among the ruins of Palmyra, with a broken frize of Stuart's in one corner, and a French moulding (I know not its name) which is to be its substitute in another. In the meanwhile we sigh for something Gothic as preferable to either, for my own part I sigh for nothing but the sun, or what is in my mind always preferable to him, especially in summer, a good West-riding Yorkshire fire.

Lady Harcourt sends her kindest compliments to you, and desires you would be pleased to send a ticket for seeing Strawberry Hill to a friend of hers, Mr. Wilmot in Bloomsbury Square. I have had no time to talk to her yet about her Poems, nor has she I fear time to correct them.

Lord Harcourt and she join in all kindnesses with your much obliged and most sincere servant

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, July 17, 1782.

I answer your letter directly, that I may lose no time in obeying Lady Harcourt's commands. I have very little else to say; knowing and intending to know nothing since I left London. A few words in answer to yours will suffice. My two friends could do no other than they did, being persuaded from the importance of what was pending abroad, that they should be criminal in quitting at such a moment. Mr. Conway in particular had differed and carried the very point against Mr. Fox, on which the latter pretends to have broken. It would have been extraordinary indeed if Conway had made that a plea for resigning!

As to the consequences of the rupture, I have no doubt but that they will be the restoration of the old system, sooner or later, in whole or in part, but so I foresaw they would be the moment Lord Rockingham died. Indeed that was the intention before he came in, for so early had the division begun, or rather there never had been any union. Pride, rashness, folly and knavery have dissipated even pretences, and every thing is to begin anew. If you have youth or courage enough to commence a fresh chace, I have no objection. For myself, I confess I am too old; nor am I eager to be aiding and abetting more Irish adventurers in getting pensions of £3000 a year. They have picked the pockets of others full as honest as themselves, and

call it saving the nation's money! I shall preserve the principles I have always maintained, but merely as old fashioned Gothic relics, that are of no use. Some mischiefs are prevented, and now and then some little advantage is obtained for the country *par bricole* by opposition, but you see, and I earlier saw, how all oppositions when successful terminate, but I doubt the question, I mean in practice, is reduced to this. Kings want to have slaves for nothing. Patriots want to be richly paid for being slaves. All therefore that liberty gets is by having the question undecided; opposition keeps it undecided, and implies that there is something to be gotten by it. Thus I am glad there will be a new opposition, but as to believing in its views or expecting any benefit to my country from its success, you will excuse me.

I shall be glad to receive *my notes:* I have kept no copy and wanted to see them, as I have begun the continuation, and would not have the style very incongruous; but I had much rather you would bring them yourself, you promised me a visit: the uninhabitable state of Nuneham makes it impossible for me to come to you. Let us amuse ourselves with pleasanter objects than politics, nothing is left of England but the corpse which you see is very carrion, for the vultures prey on it. I can tell you much of what has passed of late; but for the future am determined neither to think on or concern myself with public affairs. My chief business, if Lady Harcourt and you please, shall be to be her printer and your commentator, and the

more you both employ me, the better I shall be satisfied.

P. S. It is not probable that the ticket should reach Mr. Wilmot before Saturday, but as I am to have some *Archæologists* that day, I was forced to accept it. I would not haggle with Lady Harcourt or should have wished to fix the day, for I have been so invaded lately and had so many quarrels, that I am forced to be rigorous about my rules and restrict the number to *four*, as I have been seriously abused for having made some exceptions.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Aug. 4, 1782.

I have received your or rather my volume and the notes, I had already sketched the preface, but not having the Epistle here I could proceed no further, however as I must go to town to-morrow I shall bring one down with me; but probably finish this letter there, for I have nothing to tell you and I am sure am not in your debt, for letters or a visit. Nay I do not perceive that your presence at Nuneham advances any work there, I have neither received Lady Harcourt's MS. nor a design for the Gothic building, which my painted glass is to deck. Does your being within the vortex of Oxford benumb all your faculties?

I have borrowed and been reading Monsr. de

Lille's poem on Gardening, it is a poor affair, with here and there, but rarely, a few pretty lines amidst hundreds of very flat. He seems to have no scientific taste in the matter, but to have picked up some lean ideas, which he repeats over and over, and tries to embellish with modern philosophy, a mode more impertinent than their native levity. Their beards are as factitious and awkward as their crooks and scrips were when they used to write about their bergeres and hameaux and dress Pan and satyrs in flesh-coloured lutestring; you will like better to hear sayings of George Selwyn; on Lord Camden's son having another place, he said, *sat prata biberunt*, and that the nomination of the Duke of Portland for first Lord of the Treasury put him in mind of an old presbyterian tract, called, *a shove to a heavy* * * * *Christian.* In short, he who never read anything, has always a quotation ready and apropos.

Lord Monboddo has proposed himself to Mrs. Garrick, but she rejected *the union*, as the Scots threaten to do, and as it would be lucky if they did — much luckier if they always had, instead of sending all their lean cattle to be fatted in our pastures.

Pray tell Lord Harcourt that poor Clive is better, yet her fits of the jaundice return so often that I much doubt her recovery. Indeed the apothecary fears her liver is affected — she is shrunk to an astonishing degree.

Lady Di Beauclerc is painting a room at her charming villa that was Mr. Gyles's, and that I have

christened *Spenser Grove.* It is nothing but a row of lilacs in festoons on green paper, but executed in as great a style as Michael Angelo would have done for a Pope's villa; and without even making a sketch. You would know the *countenance of every* single flower, and call them by their names, but alas! those glorious wreaths that you would wish to cut out and glaze, were any glasses large enough, are painted in water colours and will not last two summers; in each pannel of the surbase she has painted a sprig or chaplet of geranium or ivy or perriwinkle, and every one is a capital picture. Every plant has its identic character as her human figures have; you have never seen my picture of her gipsies telling a country girl's fortune, but I dont pity you, you might see it if you would, but I never wish any one to do what is not done but by solicitation.

Berkeley Square, 6th.

I am in town, but it looks as if nobody else was, every house is shut up. I dont understand the language of bricks, or I dare to say I could send you very entertaining dialogues, more entertaining than what servants say to one another of their masters, and a good deal more true, and I dare to say still less favourable.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 20, 1782.

You are a very wayward brother, and were not I the sweetest tempered angel upon earth, we should infallibly quarrel, you have broken your word and then grow sulky because you are in the wrong. I have tempted you and scolded you, and *agacèd* you indirectly to no purpose, but I know how to punish you out of your own law-book which orders one most charitably to heap coals of fire on those who are to blame. This suits my disposition too better than pouting, for I have so little time left that I am resolved not to throw any of it away upon ill-humour. So if your majestic silence is to last the Lord knows why, you must be cross alone, for I shall appear at Nuneham next month when I am summoned, and be as glad to see you as if you was the most reasonable person in the world.

The newspapers say that Mr. Stratford's Play of Lord Russel has been offered and accepted at Drury Lane. I conclude, cut for the stage by Master Doctor Cumberland, who I know had taken it in hand; what a delicious potion must a bumper of red-hot lava smoking from Vesuvius be, when extinguished by a double quantity of the coldest aconite! But how can the royalist empiric have been able to convert a whig bonfire into an illumination to the honour of Majesty, oh! yes, such things may be: I have seen such.

If you have a mind that this letter should be longer, you must suppose that the two following pages are filled with accounts of robberies and murders. I know enough, and know nothing else, but as half of them are lies you may as well imagine them as read the inventions. The papers are so full of lies that I have lately proposed as an economic plan that every family should invent its own gazette. The housekeeper might give it out with the napkins in a morning, and it would serve for the day as well as what the newsman brings. I like this way too of giving you *charte blanche*, because it is an exact answer to your two or three letters which you have never written. Adieu.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Nuneham, Sept. 26, 1782.

I confess myself to be the most atrocious of epistolary sinners, and after so short yet so plenary a confession have nothing further to say than to beg your absolution, which perhaps you will the more readily grant when I give you the *verbum sacerdotis* that if I had been less sinful I should only have been the more dull for having had nothing to say that could in any sort have amused you, my letters must consequently have been worse than no letters at all, and if you want further proof take it from this, which will be a just specimen of what its two predecessors would have

been had they come into existence and been born in due time.

Our *lambris dorèe* and all our other Frencherys go on so slowly that I have my doubts whether we shall be able to receive the party that you were to have come with this next month, and if you should chuse to come alone we have an English dead-white painter who would presently give you the head-ache or stomach-ache and drive you away again. In short I see so little chance of meeting you here that I am planning a scheme with Stonhewer (who is here for a few days) of leaving this place about the 20th of October, and if he can be then in London, of going to him and from thence of visiting you at Strawberry; but this must be done between the 20th and 28th, for on the 30th I must be at York. All this I dare not tell Lord Harcourt, who I know expects me to stay here till the last moment. His Lordship has got over from Paris with a print of the Tombeau of Jean Jacque, and another of his introduction into the Champes Elizèes, a French poem on *Jardins*, but as it is gone to Oxford to be bound, I can give you no further account of it except that he holds with Sir W. Chambers that the Chinese are our models. The author's name I have also forgot, but as the notes to my new edition of my English Garden are not printed off I shall perhaps add one *sur son sujet* if on reading him I find him worth notice or notifying, which puts me in mind to ask you whether you have thought it worth while to notify King Stephen's watch, which I hear is printed as a pamphlet and most impudently attributed

to your humble servant, whose back (Heaven be thanked) is broad enough to bear all booksellers' flams whatever. You shall hear from me again when I can fix my journey, for as I said before I despair of seeing you here though the Lord and the Lady do not, who are as much yours as

your dutiful though remiss servant,

W. M.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

York, Nov. 23, 1782.

It is high time that I should advertise you that I have commenced a new quarter's residence here which will continue till the 11th of next February, and that I am now starving myself in a cold cathedral that I may enjoy the sunshine of the following August, Sept. and Oct., which may perhaps disappoint me as much as the three last did. I supplicate in the meantime your correspondence, "Off youre charitie write to the soule of William Mason clerk which residethe in York thre calendere moneths, off whose wretched estate I praye you have mercie." As to any return I can make you, you are not to look for it except perhaps about the 19th of next month, when a county meeting may perhaps give my dulness, and the dulness of the place a fillip. I know not whether I spell right or no. The winter here sets in so severely, that if it does so

in the South I fancy it has ere this driven you from Strawberry to Berkeley Square. Pray write soon, and believe me always

most truly yours

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 27, 1782.

Alas! I am totally incapacitated for being your gazetteer: you see I cannot pen my newspaper myself, nor see people to tell me news, nor have I scarce voice enough to dictate if I knew any. In short, I have the gout in five places without reckoning sub-divisions of fingers: moreover, I have a higher fever than usual; or that if the gout does not kill me, perhaps one of his Hussars may. I had been in town but three days when I was seized and have grown much worse ever since, yet not having had much pain, my patience is not exhausted.

As I am no stock-jobber I have not calculated my own belief about peace or war: I wait for my apothecary with more earnestness, than for the decisive courier. All factions I suppose are as much at bay, though probably with far less indifference. I wish the world well and therefore desire peace; but what have I to wish but not to suffer? I shall not send this away till to-morrow, that if I should have a tolerable night which will be my first, I may tell you so.

26th.

I have had a quiet night and very little fever to-day, and hope my disorder has taken a favourable turn.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

York, Dec. 4, 1782.

Though your Postscript gives me hopes that your gout is going off, yet I cannot help making my enquiries in hopes that a speedy answer from you may tell me that it is entirely gone, though I fear this very severe weather is against you.

In my last I forgot to mention that I sometime ago received a very civil message for you from Mr. Gilpin, intimating that if you would do him the honour to accept one of his Drawings, and give it a place in your Collection he would send you one. This I have already answered for you in as civil an affirmative, and therefore you have nothing to do but thank him for it when it does come. I fancy one of his Tours on the Wye is either published or soon will be, for I received a book from him by way of specimen, sometime ago. The Aquatinta plates are the best imitations of his style that can be, I am sure you will be pleased with them, and you would do well to send to Blamire in the Strand near Northumberland House to secure a good impression.

Pray what authority had you to say that Mr. Pope's mother was Cooper's daughter? which authority I followed in the Print my servant etched from Richardson's drawing. The Biog. Britannica and Ruffhead and Warburton's Edition, (see note to the 381 line of the Prologue to the Satires) call her the daughter of William Turner, Esq. of York, and in the Parish of Worsbro, a village very near Lord Strafford is the following Register —

1643. Edith the Daughter of Mr. William Turner, Bapt. 18 June.

Which Mr. Brooke one of the Heralds who is writing an account of Yorkshire families, says is the same person.

All this it is true is of little moment. But it is Archæological, and does very well to make my letter of a more competent length when I have nothing better to say, except that I am

most sincerely yours

W. MASON.

"What Peace! so long as the whoredoms of my mother Jezabel and her witchcrafts are so many." Pray when you are well enough to see Lady Craven, (whom Lord Strafford calls your Sappho) ask her after her Lawn sleeved Phaon, my worthy Diocesan.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Dec. 7, 1782.

I have been so extremely ill that I say a great deal when I tell you I think I am recovering. Whether I shall recover even to where I was before seems very doubtful to me. The attack, though the fit was very short was so violent and I have so little strength, that it will require much time at least to re-establish me.

Thus much I could not help saying to your kind enquiry but neither my head nor my breast will let me say much more.

I thank you for accepting Mr. Gilpin's very obliging offer which I shall much value and beg you to thank him for.

What I said of Pope's mother was taken from Vertue's MSS. but I had made a mistake which is corrected in the new edition of the Anecdotes. Samuel Cooper's wife was sister of Pope's mother and therefore Cooper was brother-in-law of Pope's father.

I am not likely to see Sappho soon: in the mean time she has my free leave to indemnify herself with the high priest of Lemnos.

My poor head is not at all a receptacle for politics, and my voice as little fit to talk of them, especially when all is uncertainty and conjecture, nor is the busy,

world a scene for me, who have just made shift to linger on the threshold.

Adieu, my Dear Sir, whenever I am able I will write again. —

It is true that I am tolerably recovered except in my right hand which never will recover, for all joints are so incrusted with chalkstones that I can scarce move any but my thumb; and though as you perceive I can still write by the help of the last, it is so slowly and with so much uneasiness that I commonly make Kirgate write for me.

When one is grown so old and so helpless, and foresees as I do that the next severe fit will probably carry me off, you will not wonder that I care very little for what is passing and less for what is to happen when I am gone. Politics I have done with, and should were I in a more vigorous state. To me there is a new generation, and nothing has less decorum than an old man pretending to belong to another age. My notions were all embraced above forty years ago, and have never varied. They had little weight with any body when I was younger. I should still less expect them to listen to an Antediluvian. Why should I expect it; do such ancients as I deign to conform to new modes? I cannot think Mrs. Siddons the greatest prodigy that ever appeared, nor go to see her act the same part every week and cry my eyes out every time. Were I five and twenty, I suppose I should weep myself blind, for she is a fine actress, and fashion would

make me think a brilliant what now seems to me only a very good rose diamond.

Still it is not that I am not very willing to be amused, and do try to divert myself as well as I can, and intend to do so to the end of my lease. For example I have lately seen an essay on Gardening written by Mons. Girardin, Rousseau's grave-digger. There are some sensible ideas in it, but as the French write by the laws of fashion more than by those of common sense, his rules are far from being all practicable. As it is the ton too to talk Agriculture, his book concludes with it, as Bishop Berkley's tar-water ended with the Trinity. Two passages are very delightful. Mons. Girardin being a rigid classic, will tolerate nothing but Grecian Temples and Domes. Spires, those most graceful and picturesqne of all elevations, he proscribes as gothic and barbarous, and thinks he has exploded them for ever by this Brobdignaggian puerility. "*Ils assassinent les nuages.*"

His receipt for making rocks in your garden is not less admirable: "Take a mountain, break it into pieces with a hammer, number the fragments and observe their antecedent positions: place them in their original order, cover the junctures with mould: plant ivy and grass and weeds, which will hide the fractures, and so you may have a cart-load of Snowdon or Penmenmaur in the middle of your bowling-green, and no soul will suspect that it did not grow there.

Like the Abbé de Lisle he is fond too of erecting cenotaphs to heroes and patriots, which with the French

rage imitating whatever is the vogue of the hour would convert their inclosures into churchyards, and Vestris would have a statue as well as Turenne — but we have no right to laugh at France; Vestris was a greater idol here than at Paris; Garrick's funeral was ten times more attended than Lord Chatham's and Mrs. Siddons has obliterated General Elliot:

I nunc et nugas tecum meditare canoras!

That is, you may play on your Celestinette, mend our gardens or the Constitution, and the first singer or dancer will efface all your vigils in a moment, as much as if you had endowed an Hospital, for this is the land were all things are forgotten!

I have been two days labouring through this letter, and yet my lame awkwardness has made me blot it so that it is scarce legible; but I can do no better, adieu!

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

York, Jan. 18, 1783.

I have heard frequently from Mr. Stonhewer and Lord Harcourt that you had recovered from your late fit, and that a lameness in your hand was the only cause that I did not hear from you, and this (as I had literally nothing to say that could in any sort amuse you) prevented me from writing to make as they call it obliging inquiries. As to our reports, petitions &c.,

you reckon not about them, neither indeed have you any occasion, for I take for granted they will all end in smoke; nevertheless I do firmly believe that if Lord North dares to give that general and decided opposition to parliamentary reformation which it is said he intends, a flame will arise out of our smoke which will be found hard to quench, till he has suffered for the evils he has brought on this wretched nation. As to his present strength I think we are entirely obliged to the Rockingham Administration for that, who should never have accepted places till he and two others had been impeached. This is my present political creed, and so ends my catechism — yet one word more, I think that Burke's mad obloquy against Lord Shelbourn, and those virulent pamphlets in which he certainly must have had a hand will do more to fix him in his office than any thing else. By coming into Yorkshire to Lord Fitzwilliam's last summer and there wrangling with various of his Lordship's visitors about Parliamentary reform, he in like manner indisposed several gentlemen of property and consequence against that noble lord, if therefore he has not a quarter of that consequence which Lord Rockingham had (which will certainly be the case) in this county, he may lay it all to the effect of his friend's eloquence.

I have heard that your printing house has been robbed; I hope you have lost nothing of great consequence. On this topic I think you might employ another hand. Adieu, I am going in my character of Justice of the Peace to attend at St. Peter's session.

Pray have you heard any particulars of our Archbishop's speech to the Queen; I hear it was on the old topic.

Yours most sincerely

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 10, 1783.

I have at last received your Fresnoy from Sir Joshua, you have made it a very handsome book; and I am pleased that you have added Gray's Chronologic List. Sir Joshua has lately given me too his last Discourse to the Academy, which I will tell you *entre nous*, is rather an apology for or an avowal of the object of his own style, that is effect, or impression on all sorts of spectators. This lesson will rather do hurt than good on his disciples, and make them neglect all kind of finishing. Nor is he judicious in quoting Vandyck, who at least specified silks, satins, velvets. Sir Joshua's draperies represent cloathes, never their materials. Yet more; Vandyck and Sir Godfrey Kneller excelled all painters in hands, Sir Joshua's are seldom even tolerably drawn. I saw t'other day one of, if not the best of his works, the portrait of Lord Richard Cavendish; little is distinguished but the head and hand; yet the latter, though nearest to the spectator is abominably bad, so are those of my three nieces; and though the effect of the whole is charming, the details are slovenly, the faces

only red and white; and his journeyman, as if to distinguish himself, has finished the lock and key of the table like a Dutch flower-painter.

I observe that you say that in Pope's Epistle to Jervas, he changed *Wortley* for *Worseley* in later editions, but surely it was *Worseley* in the earliest editions. I did not know that it had ever been printed Wortley, being so possessed of its being *Worseley* that I did not perceive the change. Lady Worseley, mother of Lady Carteret, was a beauty and friend of Pope.

Are not you concerned for the death of Brown? I made a bad Epitaph for him, which if you please you may recolour with any tints that remain on your pallet with which you repainted Fresnoy: here it is.

With one lost Paradise the name
Of our first Ancestor is stained;
Brown shall enjoy unsullied fame
For many a Paradise regained.

I have a mind should you approve it, to call Designers of Gardens, *Gardenists*, to distinguish them from *Gardeners:* or *Landscapists*. I wish you would coin a term for the art itself.

I have heard nothing of Cumberland's pedestrian tragedy, but that all the men laughed at, all the women cried at it. I know no more literary news, and I have done with all other. Adieu!

Your coalition with Johnson is super-excellent, yet have I lived so long and seen so many strange evolu-

tions, that do you know, I should not be quite surprised, if it were a reality and not a Parody. Chaos is in good earnest come again, and were not the nation at once so dissipated and so detached from all esteem for persons, which it is impossible to feel, I should expect very serious consequences. But as in the primitive chaos though all the elements were at strife; we are not told of any bloodshed, that neither the fire was drowned, nor the water boiled over. I conclude the present confusion will subside in a new *Creation*, that the Devil will steal into Paradise, that the new couple will be driven out of it again after they have filled their bellies, and that things will go on as they were in the beginning, are now, and shall be for ever more. Such being my idea of politics, I should if I had not as you know already bidden adieu to them, take a still more solemn leave of them now. I am willing to die with what little honesty and consistency I have. How that would be possible I do not see when all principles are confounded. One cannot be of a party by one's self and where is that one to which I would say I appertain. To none, absolutely to none. Nor would that be the strongest objection. To stand single may be the honestest part, but then it must be a negative one. What can an insulated man do? no good—if connected, I fear (as my conscience is a little timid) he may do more harm than good. In short the more I reflect the less am I satisfied with the profession of politician, and therefore my remnant shall not be discoloured with it. Personal interests or personal pas-

sions will creep into the paste, and perhaps leaven the whole lump. I wash my hands of it.

I have not seen the new edition of your Garden advertised, or should certainly have sent for it. I do want you to give me three or four impressions of your own Head and of Gray's, (I mean of the small quartos) you know the principal occupation of my dotage is *making books,* that is dressing them up with prints and pretty bindings; a charming amusement for a superanuated child and which neither hurts the eyes nor employs the head, your Fresnoy is to be decorated proudly. Thus I have answered your kind question and told you that I am very well, in short a very fine boy of my age, though I have neither cut any teeth, nor lost any; my hand too though very ricketty, you see can walk alone again. Adieu.

Yours entirely

H. WALPOLE.

March 7, 1783.

To the Hon. Horace Walpole.

York, March 5, 1783.

Now that Chaos is come again I hold myself absolved from every obligation; I shall therefore scorn to make any apology to you for my late silence. I have found myself better employment than that of writing either to you or any of my former friends. I have gone a great way towards a literary coalition with Dr. Johnson;

our object is no less than the complete administration of the Blue Stocking Club which we mean to govern in a truly constitutional way without any concurrence from Madam Montagu; all our arrangements are not finally settled, Cumberland will not come into our plan unless I give him my word and honour that I will write prologues to all the plays he has now on the stocks, or shall have on the stocks. Hard terms as these are, I believe I shall have public spirit enough to accede to them. I never saw a man so placable and even reasonable as Johnson himself; he is willing to own Gray's Odes tolerable, provided I will not insist on his liking blank verse, and as we are both agreed in thinking Macpherson the forger of Ossian we have already decided that he shall be expelled the club. Mrs. Montagu however is still so obstinate that she holds her feast of shells in her feather dressing room, she will however certainly in due time be forced to submit to our terms. Soame Jennyns has absolutely refused to take the lead in her conversaziones, pleading age and infirmities, and the lack of his former volatile spirits. Smelt has been sent for from the banks of the Swale, but he declares he has done both with the courtly and witty world; in short if we can only keep together we shall carry our point hollow. I am so clear in this that I think I can safely offer you the place of Epigramatist General if you will accept it, but any other that you are less fit for would suit our administration better; you must however be sure to follow our leading principle, which is, that when you have read the worst poem that ever was

written you must immediately make the author of it your bosom friend, and declare that it is not writings but writers that you hold in estimation. Pray give me your sentiments upon this point immediately, for we shall be in power incontinently.

With these great ideas in my head you cannot wonder that I am careless as to any news you can send me, besides I know you can tell me no more than Tonton could of what is going forward at St. James's; you laid aside your political correspondence with me in the very nick of time, for I should have defied you to have carried it on to the present moment. You are tolerably good at description. But Milton failed when he attempted to describe the limbo of vanity; were you to write to me now you must describe the limbo of incoherency, which I look upon as a much harder task. Let us talk of some thing within the sphere of common sense. My edition of Fresnoy, that is, Graham's printed 1716, in the Epistle to Jervas reads Wortley, and this is the 2nd edition, undoubtedly it was so in the first, but on second thoughts this is the first in which that epistle was printed. Dryden's own in quarto only preceded it. I wish I had mentioned this to you before I printed my note that I might have added to it your notices about Lady Worsley. I wish too I had referred my reader to your account of Jervas to authorise what I had said of him, for all readers do not know that he was a bad painter. I like your Epigram on poor Brown much, and your new invented term of gardenists; I wish I and my commentator had been possessed of it before

my last edition was published, for published I suppose it now is, as it was printed off three weeks ago, but if you would see it you must buy it, for of it I make no presents looking upon it as a second edition. Pray give me a line to assure me of your health; I enquire not after that of my country.

Yours &c.

W. MASON.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, May 4, 1783.

What can a man write about in these days? these chaotic days, was I to write in my last vein and tell you that my friend Lexiphanes and I had been employed in raising a loan to finish Madam Montagu's feather dressing room, and that we had paid the price of ostrich feathers for goose quills, you would hardly take it for an excuse, and think me as tedious as I suppose the dramatized Tristram Shandy may be. Therefore I will only beg your pardon for not writing sooner, and for not sending (what indeed I have not) the impressions you desired of the etching of my noble self. I have indeed a few of the two plates of Mr. Gray, and had any body gone from this part of the world to town you would have had them ere this, but they shall be sent the first opportunity; in the meantime I have written to Mr. Stonhewer to

tell him that Carter my former servant (who I fear is now half starving in town) has the plate of my head, and to bid him bring a few copies to you, he is a good copyist in oyl, and if you could recommend him to any body who wants a picture cheaply and faithfully copied, he would answer their purpose, and be an act of charity.

If you wish to know any thing of my present occupations, intentions &c. &c, I refer you to either Lord Harcourt or Mr. Stonhewer, the history of myself is not worth writing twice over or reading once over, and yet I have the vanity to think it a better history than the Parliamentary history would be of precisely the same era, I mean from the time that I left York in February to the present moment.

I find on looking over what I have scribbled that where the marginal x is I have written something very like Irish. You may make a present of the sentence if you please to my Lord Northington, it may be of service to him. I rejoice that your ricketty hand is able to walk alone, if it would now and then visit the most undeserving of its correspondents it might employ itself very well, till you are in a habit of visiting the purchaser of Mr. Prado's villa. Pray tell me if it be really true that Barry the painter has put me in Elysium: the papers have made me very vain with the thought. Adio!

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, May 7, 1783.

If I could tell you *what a man might write about in these chaotic days*, I should have written to you oftener myself, but the chaos that began about this time twelvemonth disgusted me so much, as it defeated all the prospects which I had hoped though never expected to see realized, that I firmly determined to bid adieu to politics; and as nothing else worth repeating does happen, I imitated your indolence, and consequently was kind to your conscience, which must now and then reproach itself with its remissness. I did indeed a few days ago begin a letter to you, but as I perceived it was almost all about myself, I left it unfinished at Strawberry, and now on the encouragement of your letter, I shall send you this instead of it, and never finish that. Nay, another of your questions which I can answer gives me occasion to repeat the only thing in that letter which was worth your knowing. Yes, I had told you that Barry has apotheosised you — aye, and in full chorus with your beatified friends, Dr. Johnson, Soame Jenyns, Burke and Mrs. Montagu, and with some who may be your friends too, but whose names I never heard before, nor remember now. There are two gentlewomen too, who I believe will stare as much as you at the company in which they find themselves. Had they been hurried into Charon's hoy at once, they could not be more surprised at the

higgledepiggledyhood that they would meet there. In short these two poor gentlewomen are the Dutchesses of Devonshire and Rutland, who this new master of the ceremonies to Queen Fame has ordered that well-bred usher to the Graces, Dr. Johnson, to present to Mrs. Vicequeen Montagu, under whose tuition they are to be placed, who is recommended to them as a model to copy. This vision of immortality I have not yet seen, but I am dabbing my eyes with euphrasy and rue, and propose to treat them with it to-morrow. I must astringe my mouth too with allum, lest I laugh and be put into purgatory again myself, as I was for the same crime when I first saw Barry's Homeric Venus standing start naked in front, and dragging herself up to heaven by a pyramid of her own red hair. I had never seen nor heard of the man, and unfortunately he stood at my elbow. To punish me for that unwitting crime, he clapped me into his book on painting as an admirer of the Dutch school, which others have blamed me for undervaluing. I suppose he concluded that if I laughed at bombast-frenzy, I must doat on the lowest buffoonery.

I shall be glad to learn from Lord Harcourt or Mr. Stonhewer, your future plans or motions, though I probably shall not be much benefitted by them. I think you would have told me, if seeing me fell within your design. The less time I have left, the more I wish to pass it with those I love, but fortune must produce that advantage if I receive it. I cannot expect that it should influence others. The summer,

when I could best enjoy their company, separates me almost entirely from my friends, and I have not youth or activity enough to follow them; so that in effect the gout or its consequences tyrannizes my whole year. But I do not complain; could one arrange one's scheme of life to one's wish, it would be but more painfull to part with it; age and its attendant or concomitant deprivations reconcile one to laying down its burthen. Long life is doomed to the loss of those we love, their absence therefore appears a light evil in comparison.

If Carter of who I have heard nothing should call on me and I could recommend him, I would willingly. It is not very likely I should have an opportunity. The town is overrun with painters, as much as with disbanded soldiers, sailors and ministers, and I doubt half of all four classes must be hanged for robbing on the highway, before the rest can get bread, or any body else eat theirs in quiet. I shall heartily pity three of the denominations — for the fourth compassion itself cannot make an option between the Hangers and Hangees; who can care whether a Ld. Ad. or a Sir F. or T. R. is the culprit or the executioner. Don't wonder I have done with politics, when there has been such crossing over and figuring in, that I defy prejudice itself to hold the scales with a partial hand in favour of any faction.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, May 11, 1783.

This is only a codicil to my last, and shall not be longer than my testament. I have seen Lord Harcourt; he says you will not come till the Parliament rises. Were you a Member of Parliament I should think you exceedingly in the right: not being so, excuse me, if I do not comprehend your reason, not that I contest it with you, for were I to convince you I should not think myself a jot nearer to persuading you.

My other reason for writing now is to do justice to your St. Peter who has let you into Heaven. I mean Barry the painter. I have seen his Exhibition, and am much pleased with one of his eight pictures, and that one, is one of the two largest, it is the Olympic victors crowned. The colouring is cold and unanimated, but the figures are finely drawn and graceful, and the whole composition is simple and classic. Indeed he may improve the colouring, as he says in his book that none of the pieces are finished, nor have their full *chiaro scuro*, of the rest, the Orpheus is very bad, he is blind, dancing and drunk. The Grecian harvest-home, if not a mere beginning is poor enough. In the Triumph of the Thames, Doctor Burney is not only swimming in his clothes, but playing on a harpsichord, a new kind of water-music. For Mrs. Montagu and her pupil Duchesses and her Chamberlain, the

Doctor, they are hustled into such a mob of heads that you would think them crowding out of Ranelagh, and so unlike they are, that I did not know which was which. Then there are so many Dukes and Duchesses in robes besides, that I turned to Elysium to avoid a Coronation, and there I found ye all in a masquerade, that is you in your gown and cassock; Charles I. in his Vandyck dress; Homer in rags; Leo X in his purple; the Black Prince in armour, and Ossian in flesh and blood, for even that nonentity he has sent to heaven, though indeed after obliging him previously to go and be born in Ireland. I suppose there is some such maxim of the Schoolmen as *Nemo beatificatur qui non nascitur*. There is a superb shoulder and wing of a mountainous Angel that supports all heaven on its back, and a gigantic leg of another that dangles from aloof, and put me in mind of my own Otranto.

Barry has expounded all in a book which does not want sense, though full of passion and self, and vulgarisms, and vanity. It is an essay to recommend himself to an establishment. He calls Mortimer superior to Salvator Rosa, though his best merit was being Salvator's imitator; but there is one thought that pleased me extremely. He says that, in his Elysium (which I did not observe, for it is impossible to see a tenth part at one view) he has represented Titian offering his pallet to Raphael.

Jarvis's Window from Sir Joshua's Nativity is glorious. The room being darkened and the sun shining through the transparencies, realizes the illu-

mination that is supposed to be diffused from the glory and has a magic effect.

The Duc de Chartres is arrived. This *amiable Prince* (to talk in the style of the newspapers on like occasions) is, note it, six and thirty, is married and has daughters.

Lady Clermont made a great dinner and assembly for him on Thursday. He came dirty and in a frock with metal buttons enamelled in black, with hounds and horses, a fashion I remember here above forty years ago. The moral Madame de Genlis was mistress of this old cub and is now Governess to the Princesses his daughters; you see, we may still learn from France.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

Aston, May, 19, 1783.

My friend Mr. Alderson brings you with this the copies you requested of Gray's head, it is the first opportunity I have had of sending them, and therefore I do not apologize for the delay. He comes up to be a negotiator between poor Lady Holderness and her quondam son-in-law, who by taking advantage of a lawyer's blunder in Lord Holderness's will is likely to distress her exceedingly and I shall not wonder if the house, pictures, &c., in Hertford Street, follows Sion Hill, 'tis a sad business and I pity her extremely. If Mr. Alderson is lucky enough to find you when he

brings this to your house, I should be greatly obliged to you if you would permit him to give you a memorandum relating to an application which Lady Holderness made to General Conway sometime ago for a young relation of his about an ensigncy. I know he put him on his list, and all I wish and desire of you is (if it be to be done easily) to act the ghost in Hamlet and only to say.

This visitation Conway
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.

There is no occasion for you to put on Francis the First's armour — but to be serious, as the commission wanted is for any place or service, and not to make a parading officer in the Park it would be a kind thing in you so far to interfere and (I would not wish you to go a step further) to learn whether her Ladyship's application is likely to succeed in any short time, for the young man is at present rather a burthen on his relation, who having a family of his own to provide for, ought to make his charity not only begin but keep at home.

I am much obliged to you for your two last letters and particularly for the entertaining account of Barry's pictures, but I would rather be out of his Elysium than so far out of your books that you should think me incapable of being persuaded though convinced. That sentence of yours is a severer satire than any I ever penned, I hope it is an unjust one. But self is blind. However I do assure I hope to see you shortly,

for though I mean to go to Nuneham before I come to London, and to keep his Majesty's birthday with his Lordship, yet I intend to visit you and a few other of my friends when that birthday has thinn'd the town a little. I will conclude this scrawl with an anecdote which I believe will be new to you, though of an oldish date, soon after the news of Brown's death had reached the Royal ear he went over to Richmond gardens and in a tone of great satisfaction said to the under gardener "Brown is dead: now Mellicant, you and I can do here what we please." If this is not a characteristic trait, I know not what is. I shall not leave Aston before the first of June therefore you will have time to favour me with another letter if this reaches you soon though the bearer is not yet certain what day he shall set out.

Yours very truly

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, May 31, 1783.

Though your letter is dated on the 19th, I did not receive it till yesterday. Mr. Alderson left it at my door just as I was getting into my chaise to come hither, and did not send up word he was there, or I should certainly have desired to see him. However, I wrote a line immediately to General Conway, desiring he would look over his memoranda for a recommenda-

tion of Lady Holderness, (for you did not even tell me the young gentleman's name) and send me word whether any thing was likely to be done for him soon. I expect to hear to-morrow before this goes away.

I tell you honestly that this was all I could do. When Mr. Conway was made Commander-in-Chief, I earnestly recommended to him to be strict in doing justice, as I think nothing so cruel as to have boys by favour put over old officers; and not above two months ago encouraged him to resist such a partiality for one of his own nephews, telling him that such a refusal would serve him to plead to others. As I knew too that from my friendship with him I should frequently be solicited to apply to him, I desired that whenever I should he would not comply with my request if it was not a perfectly just and reasonable one, and I promised that I would approve instead of taking his refusal ill. I went farther, for one of my own nephews asked me to get him made one of Mr. Conway's Aid-de-Camps: I positively refused. I said Mr. Conway had been forty years in the army, had commanded different regiments and must know meritorious officers whom he ought to prefer, and whom it would hurt if he took my recommendation; or that he would be hurt himself if he did not oblige me. I am sure you will approve my conduct, and therefore I do not apologize for doing no more than asking your question, except saying that the young man was desirous of real service. Indeed at present when so many regiments are to be broken, I conclude Mr.

Conway must be overwhelmed with solicitations, even for the real service, as many officers will be, must be content to be saved without greater indulgence.

I am shocked at what you tell me of the *son-in-law*, and pity the Countess much, yet I am not surprised: there is no discouragement to infamous proceedings. Mr. Falkener has just abandoned a daughter of Lord Ashburnham with worse circumstances if possible than Lord Egremont did my niece. You will not wonder when you reflect who was his patron.

You say I am very severe, why I am very angry. What the deuce is the fullness or emptiness of the town to you! Am I never to see you but after a plague? Will you never come to London but when you have not an acquaintance in it. Beauties or Ministers may affect to dread being crowded to death, but nobody haunts us who have no power, no credit. I care for as few as you, and yet I can go tamely about and nobody molests me, if you will not come till you can give the law, why I shall be in my grave. You had better laugh as I do, at my own departed visions. I will not give up my friends and the world, (as far as I chuse to have any thing to do with it) because it does not please to be amended accordingly to the plan I had drawn for it: well, but you say you will come so I will scold no more, though I cannot bear your flinging away your talents on a province or country town; you was born to fill the mouth of Fame and not to be proclaimed by a penny trumpet at a village fair.

Most of the French invasion are returned. I have

not seen one of them, cock or hen. I was so scandalously treated about my dear old friend's papers that except her memory and Tonton, I will never have any thing to do more with or love any thing that comes from France. I like Mr. Meynell's expression; he is so tired of these visitors that he says *he wishes we were safe at war again.*

Your story on Brown's death is worth a million, yet I can match it from the same *mouth*, though I cannot write it without committing some names that I must not mention. If I ever do see you, you shall hear it, that, is if I don't forget it, but we meet so seldom, that half the anecdotes I had for you will be mouldy. There is no sense in living but in a great capital, one can chuse one's way of life, and what sort of company one pleases. There is more variety of sense, and fewer prejudices: I am sure from my own practice one can live as retiredly as one chuses, and do more what one will than in any other place, without any ennui. Pray what is one to do in the country; if so unfortunate as to grow tired of one's first favourite, one's self? What! have recourse to one's neighbours! oh! they are charming company! They tell you some antiquated lie out of the newspapers, that in London did not gain credit in the steward's parlour even on its birthday. No, I have no patience with your living amongst Country Squires, instead of living amongst men.

Sunday June 1.

I have got a note from Mr. Conway. He says he

finds on his list a Mr. Alderton recommended by Lady Holderness: but that she applied before the conclusion of the war, when he thought it would rain ensigncies; that he is now left with above an hundred engagements, and that the new plan of *seconding two companies* (I don't understand military Hebrew) *with their officers on all the corps* will increase his difficulty of performing them. This does not look as if your friend would be served soon; however, as he bids me tell him if Mr. Alderton is the person, as I shall tell him it is within a letter, I do not despair. I write a line to Mr. Alderson to desire he will call on me in town on Friday; and this I send to London, by a gentleman who dines with me, to Lord Harcourt, who will deliver it to you on the birthday,

> When you are singing the day and singing the song
> And singing the day all night long.

P. S. I have writ to Mr. Conway again. The Prince of Wales and the Duke de Chartres sup with him to night. I excused myself, and as it is a glorious day I have told him how glad I am to be here rather than in Warwick Street! and that as much sun as would gild a daisy, is preferable in my eyes to all the Dan-de-Lions and Cœur-de-Lions, that ever supped since Charlemagne.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, June 9, 1783.

I have seen Mr. Alderson and told him what General Conway says, to whom I have spoken again, and who will serve his friend when he can, though it will not be soon from the circumstances I mentioned, and of which Mr. Alderson allows the force.

There are two new pieces published about Gray's poems; one is called Criticisms on the Elegy, and pretends to be written by Johnson. I was told it would divert me, that it seems to criticise Gray, but really laughs at Johnson. I sent for it and skimmed it over, but am not at all clear what it means — no recommendation of any thing; I rather think the author wishes to be taken by Gray's admirers for a ridiculer of Johnson, and by the latter's for a censurer of Gray.

The other piece is a professed defence of Gray against Johnson, by Potter the translator of Æschylus; it is sensibly written, is civil to Johnson and yet severe, but though this is the declared intention, I have heard that the true object was to revenge the attack on Lord Lyttelton at the instigation of Mrs. Montagu, who has her full share of incense, and who with insipid Bishop Hurd is pronounced the two best critics of this or any age! Were I Johnson, I had rather be criticised than flattered so fulsomely. There is nothing more foolish than the hyperboles of contemporaries on one

another, who like the nominal Dukes of Aquitaine and Normandy at a coronation have place given to them above all peers, and the next day shrink to simple knights. I have been reading some more of those pinchbeck encomiums in Beattie's new volume. He talks of the *great* Lord Lyttelton, and of the sublime and *apostolic* simplicity of my Lords Hurd and Porteus. Should not you like to hear St. Peter toast Madame Hagerdorne with the former, and St. Paul in a fast sermon out-flattering Bishop Butler with the latter? I have waded through many a silly book in my day, as my eyes know to their sorrow, but poor souls, they never had a more cruel penance imposed on them than this quarto of Beattie, though they did read the whole reign of Henry II, all Cumberland's works in metre and out of metre, all the Archæologias, and many other reverend bodies of antiquity and heraldry; Beattie's indeed is the reverse of those *anile tomes* for it is *in usum* of the cradle and nursery. I have got through 109 pages, but dearly as I love quartos I doubt I shall never compass the other five hundred and fifty pages, though in equity I would fain try whether I cannot find one page that is not the poorest common place that was ever penned. He calls his work Dissertations, moral and critical. I have corrected the last word in my copy into *Tritical.*

You will find more merit in Mr. Crabb's poem of the Village, at least in the first canto. The second is a tribute, and much too long, to the Duke of Rutland's passionate fondness for his brother, and nothing to the

purpose of the first part. The brave young man deserved an immortal epitaph; but this is a funeral sermon. However Mr. Crabb is a more agreeable poet than your heroic friend Mr. Hayley, and writes lines that one can remember.

My treillage of Roses begs its duty to the flower garden at Nuneham, and my towers long to be gossips at the christening of the tower that is to be there. My printing-house has its longings too, and if you have a mind to make it completely happy, you will contribute something to the nosegay, of which I have yet got nothing but Mr. Whitehed's charming sprig. Remember I have never printed any thing of yours yet, and my press cannot die in peace till it does.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Strawberry Hill, Sept. 22, 1783.

You desired me to write to you if I heard any news, but though a letter appears, do not expect any novelty. I have not seen the shadow of a politician since my return, nor scarce any thing but rain, and my apothecary, and yet if the former has maintained my rheumatism, the latter has cured my flightly fever by the bark, on which I determined instead of James's powder, lest the latter should only make an exchange for the gout. The bark the very first night was as efficient as opium, and I now sleep almost as well as ever, which is like a dormouse.

I do not write to notify this unimportant detail, though it is the total of my history — no, but I want to know how your pupil Mrs. Harcourt advances by your marriage of oil and water colours. Next, if it answers, I should be glad to have the receipt, that is if you have no objection and do not intend to keep your nostrum a secret till you can announce the discovery to your own honour, not that I will rob you of it. I have two purposes to serve, one to communicate the process to Lady Di, the other to employ a painter to oil some of her drawings, if your method will do for that end, and will not hurt them; but I repeat that I do not desire you to acquaint me with the process if you have the least objection.

I do not know whether my nieces are yet arrived at Nuneham; in short I am *d'une ignorance crasse!* and have been trifling entirely at home alone. I have given my Grammont to Dodsley to be reprinted, which you will say is not much employment; Oh! but it is, and a disagreeable one too, for I correct the proof sheets, the most tiresome occupation either as editor or printer. Pray whisper to Lady Harcourt that she has not given me enough to occupy me in either capacity for a week, and that I beg she will bring me more to town before I begin.

I repeat a prayer of the same kind to you. First, as you are a poet I must print something of yours; next, as you are a painter, I was so pleased with your altar-piece that I long to have a bit by your hand; why should you not execute a small piece, at least with

your new discovery! I should like it soon — if you ever did do any thing soon, that I may insert it in the description of my collection which I am finishing, and for which all the plates are ready. Paint me any little scene out of your own *garden*. I wish I was worthy to ask for any piece of music composed by yourself for your other discovered marriage the Celestinette. However, as I do not want an ear so much but that I can celebrate a performer; I send you the following Epitaph which I wrote three or four years ago, and found t'other day amongst some old papers. It was written at Lady Ossory's desire on her losing a favourite piping bull-finch, which was buried under a rose tree at Ampthill. The lines I think you never saw, and it is a great presumption to send poetry from the sexton of Parnassus to the high-priest; it is folly too to send such poetry from *Twitnam*, but it is your fault not mine if you carried off all Mr. Pope's inheritance and left me as poor a bard as the bellman, *que voici*.

All flesh is grass, and so are feathers too:
Finches must die as well as I or you.
Beneath a damask rose in good old age,
Here lies the tenant of a noble cage,
For forty moons he charmed his lady's ear
And piped obedient oft as she drew near
Though now stretched out upon a clay-cold bier.
But when the last shrill flageolet shall sound,
And raise all dicky-birds from holy ground,
This little corpse again its wings shall prune,
And sing eternally the self same tune
From everlasting night to everlasting noon.

When I send you these lines to prove that I do not totally want an ear, I put myself in mind of a story of Mr. Raftor, who, visiting a lady who never stirs out of London, and asking her if she never went into the country, she replied, "No, but I have lately got something *rural*, I have bought a cuckow clock."

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Nov. 8, 1783.

I am glad to have heard from you at last. I thought you had dropped me: which would be a little unkind, as perhaps I may not long be *a charge* to any body. I have scarce enjoyed two days of health together since I saw you. My rheumatism is not gone, and a sciatica finding how many of the family were established with me, came to join its cousins. In short my decay wears as many countenances as life itself does. I break very sensibly to myself in every respect — but enough of that.

Your Committee I should not have named if you did not, when I found we differed in opinions, I said no more. That you should be tired of them does not surprise me: It is what I foresaw would happen. I have had much more practice of that sort than you. I have been acquainted with parties all my life, and at times have been far engaged in them. I will tell you a reflection I made in 1766: *that it is vexatious even to govern fools: and as vexatious not to have fools enough*

to govern, — which perhaps may be your case. I told you truly above a year ago, that I would meddle no more with politics: and I have adhered to my resolution. I saw a moment (which I had long despaired of seeing arrive) thrown away by the treachery of Ld. Shelburne and I had not youth or spirits to recommence the pursuit. After that, when his folly had done mischief to his country and but momentary good to himself, I saw that two parties being split into three factions it must happen that two of them would unite — and it was indifferent to me whether North, Mansfield and Loughborough, or Thurlow, Dundas, Jenkinson and Shelburne were to be adopted — so that coalition for coalition one is as bad as the other. As I have no views to serve, no personal resentments to gratify, I cannot embrace either division, when all were equally guilty, except that I think worst of the traytor, who prevented the good that might have been done a year and a half ago, and who broke the former opposition to pieces. I must die consistent as I have lived, and cannot bring myself to say that either half of the criminals deserved to be hanged and the other half to be pardoned.

But do you know that I suspect your having a graver reason than you mention for being disgusted. Indeed I flatter myself you had, as in that offence I should heartily concur with you, it is on a point in which we have ever agreed; you cannot approve a correspondence with a popish army; you cannot believe that an army of 40,000 men, 30,000 of whom are papists are fit instruments to reform a protestant con-

stitution, to establish liberty, or to protect the property of Protestants to which Roman Catholics think they have a better title, you whose sentiments of him I know cannot *coalesce* with the prelatic Earl, nor wish success to a toleration which you so much condemned, which was devised by the court and was infused into our friends, and is at this moment loudly avowed and encouraged by one of whom I am sure you do not think well. No change of times or persons, no heterogeneous commixture of the partizans that lead factions, can authorize or justify an adoption of Catholics into civil Government. This has ever been — ever will be my ruling principle. Papists and liberty are contradictions and so I fear, it will too soon appear!

When I am in so grave a strain, I will pass to the latter part of your letter before I reply to other passages in the former part. You amaze me by even supposing that the epitaph I sent you could allude to the immortality of the soul. Believe me I think it is as serious a subject as you do, nor I am sure did you ever hear me treat it lightly. The three last lines which justly offended you if you so interpreted them, were intended to laugh at the absurd idea of the beatified sitting on golden thrones and chaunting eternal Allelujahs to golden harps. When men ascribe their own puerile conceptions to the Almighty Author of all things; what do they but prove that their visions are of human invention? What can be more ridiculous than to suppose that omnipotent goodness and wisdom created, and will select the most virtuous of its crea-

tures to sing his praises to all eternity?—it is an idea that I should think could never have entered but into the head of a King; who might delight to have his courtiers sing birth-day odes for ever. Pray be assured that I never trifle on so solemn and dear an interest as the immortality of the soul; though I do not subscribe to every childish and fantastic employment that silly people have chalked out for it. There is no word in any language expressive enough for the adoration and gratitude we owe to the author of all good! an eternity of praises and thanks is due to him—but are we thence to infer that *that* is the sole tribute in which he will delight, and the sole occupation he destines for beings on whom he has bestowed thought and reason? The epitaph did not deserve half a line to be said on it: but your criticism, indeed your misconception of it will excuse my saying so much in my own justification. It is no irreligion to smile at a chorister's notions of Paradise. Perhaps I on my side may have misunderstood you too—forgive me if I have, but you do not seem so serious on the tragedy you have been writing as I wish you were. I shall be very glad if you was in earnest. One of my most fervent wishes has long been that you would exercise more frequently the *verve* that is so eminently marked as your characteristic talent—your neglect of it is one of my quarrels to your Association. Ten thousand and ten thousand reasons forbid your rising to illustrious fame as secondary leader of a county meeting; you have but

to shut the door of your room and take your pen and chuse your place on Parnassus.

I will dispense with your improving painting and music, and *à propos* I thank you very much for your receipt and ten times more for the hopes you give me of a picture by your hand, in short I may be an officious, nay impertinent zealot, but I am jealous of every thing that intercepts your renown. I have that partiality for a genuine and original genius that I cannot bear its turning to the right or left. To *invent* in the arts as you have done in both those I have mentioned, is no deviation but new proofs of genius. It is none when you tell me I have an ear, alas! it is what I have most sensibly felt I want, but I shall not talk on so poor a subject as myself, and you may be sure I am sincere by my worship of Gray and you. Only men who feel their own inferiority are enthusiasts to others.

Thank you for your corrected epitaph and pray tell me more of your tragedy.

P. S. In looking again at your letter I find you are to be at York on Tuesday 11th, consequently will set out on the 10th, and then this might not find you at Aston or York, if directed to the one or the other; therefore as it contains nothing that will not keep cold, I shall not despatch it till Monday, when it is sure of finding you resident at York.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Dec. 3, 1783.

I can give you no clearer proof of my inclination to please you than by writing at present, when I have no inclination for it myself. It is not from bad health for I recovered it as soon as I came to town, the smoke of London agreeing better with me than keeping sheep on my hillock, but what can I write? Chaos you say is come again, yes truly, and Pope might add:

Joy to great Chaos! let division reign!

but I have no joy in such confusions as are occasioned by heraldic *counter changes*. It is playing at chess after jumbling all the pieces in a bag and placing them on the board indiscriminately, without separating the black from the white. Was I in the wrong to say that Lord Shelburne had disordered all system? Here are the Duke of Richmond and Mr. Pitt in the arms of Jenkinson, and Lord Bute and Lord Mansfield in opposition. Unravel and arrange all this if you can. I know but one way, which is to overlook the performers and adhere to the cause, and then you will discern the principles which have for ever produced parties. I mean the true which being the true, are always assumed, though the Professors may mean nothing but themselves. So much for politics which I should quit gladly, had I any thing more amusing, or indeed any thing else to tell you. It is scarce worth repeating

that a person was with me yesterday who is concerned in a new and more compendious way of printing. He told me he had sent his plan to and then waited on a quondam friend of yours, a certain *toaster*, who only said to him drily, "why did you send your book to me? I know nothing of printing."

Yes! Yes! I have a better story for you, Washington has instituted a new military order, called of Cincinnatus. He sent it to La Fayette. The Parisians cried, "*Diable St. Senatus, voilà un plaisant Saint! qui est ce qui en a jamais entendu parler.*" The *Devots* recurred to *les Vies des Saints*, and finding no such Apostle in the Church's red book, they are very angry with Washington for encroaching on the Pope's prerogative of creating Peers of the Upper House; for my part I think they attributed a much better Patron to the new order, than the pedantic one that Washington elected; nay and tallying much better. A senate like many of the beatified, may set out very debauched and repent at last, and cast up its vomit and die a martyr at its *dissolution.*

I now come to the pleasantest part of your letter, your Tragedy. I rejoice that you are in earnest, and shall detest your tooth-ache or any associable twitches still more if they interrupt the completion. I interest myself zealously in the dignity of your genius and wish you always to maintain, never to profane it. I do not mean that you should always be climbing the heights of Parnassus. You may sport in a valley with no less grace, but I will not allow you to hunt at Finsbury

with Lord Mayors and Aldermen. Tragedy is worthy of you, yet why care whether your buskins would pass muster before a jury of French shoemakers. Do you want a licenser to usher your piece to the press with a "*par ordre de M. le garde des Sceaux j'ai lu cette tragedie et je n'y ai rien trouvé qui doit en empêcher l'impression. (La Harpe.)*

Don't make it too horrid neither, that it may be licensed at Athens. I was glad to plead the atrociousness of the one stage to shelter myself from the impertinent delicacy of the other; but I shall indulge *you* in no extremes, you possess the whole art and can do what you please: can touch a precipice, and glide down so imperceptibly that your descent shall appear natural and easy; while we the less skilful neither know how we got up nor how to come down: and then assure folks that certain Greeks two thousand years ago broke their necks with as little address, and were mightily admired for it. I require a perfect Tragedy at your hands with no excesses in the construction, for all the rest I am in no pain: nor should be on that head had you not alarmed me. Mrs. Siddons whom I have seen again, and like much better, though in that detestable play the Gamester, shall do you justice, and Lord Harcourt will be in the third heaven between her and you. Good night.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

York, Dec. 25, 1783.

I remember when the coalition was first promulged I began a letter to you with "Chaos is come again" but now amid this wreck of "political elements" and crush "of East India Worlds" I will content myself with merely wishing you a merry Christmas, which I should wish to enjoy myself if a teazing toothache would suffer me so to do, under such a malady I trust you will forgive my late silence, and (calling it a judgment on me for my epistolary offences) give me your absolution.

Now that you have lain aside writing me political news, I am as much out of the basket as a York Alderman, and as the late wonderful event in the House of Lords has not induced you to take up your pen, I conclude I must not expect any more entertainment from you of that sort. You have however a hundred other topics constantly at hand, and therefore I shall hope for an answer to this much sooner than I deserve to receive it.

I either expressed myself very ill or you greatly misunderstood my meaning about your bird epitaph, but it is not now worth while to resume the subject, only so far as to say I am not sorry you misconceived me, since it produced from you so excellent a paragraph relating to your own creed on that important subject.

I was really serious when I told you that I was

writing a tragedy. I completed the first sketch during the month I was at Aston, and since I came here have written the first two acts, in spite of a hundred associating impediments which came upon me whether I would or no, and I fully hope to finish the whole while I stay here, if no general election should take place, in which case I must attend to the calls of friendship, but to no other; my story is an Indian one partly feigned, and what probably would appear too horrid on the stage. My aim in writing it is to shew that the unities may be preserved even to French exactitude, and yet the whole afford sufficient interest, incident and variety. I wish however you would not mention what I am about except to Lord Harcourt or Mr. Stonhewer who both know it.

Having nothing more to say I must repeat my wish to hear from you soon, and if you only tell me that you keep free from your too frequent winter visitor I shall be satisfied, believe me dear Sir,

very sincerely yours

W. MASON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

Berkeley Square, Feb. 2, 1784.

I thank you for your condolence on the death of my brother, and on the considerable diminution of my own fortune though neither are events to which I am not perfectly reconciled. My brother was 77, had

enjoyed perfect health and senses to that age, did not even begin to break till last August, suffered no pain, saw death advance gradually though fast, with the coolest tranquillity, did not even wish to live longer and died both with indifference and without affectation; is that a termination to lament?

I do lose fourteen hundred a year by his death, but had I reason to expect to keep it so long; I had twice been offered the reversion for my own life, and positively refused to accept it, because I would receive no obligation that might entangle my honour and my gratitude, and set them at variance. I never did ask or receive a personal favour from my own most intimate friends when in power, though they were too upright to have laid me under the same difficulties, and have always acted an uniform and honest part; but though I love expence, I was content with a fortune far above any merit I can pretend to, and knew I should be content with it were it much lessened. As it would be contemptible to regret the diminution at 66 there is no merit in being quite easy under the loss. But you do me honour I do not deserve in complimenting me on not loving money. I have always loved what money would purchase, which is much the same thing; and the whole of my philosophy consists in reconciling myself to buying fewer bawbles for a year or two that I may live, and when the old child's baby-house is quite full of playthings.

I am surprised that you expected me to take notice of Lord Harcourt's turning courtier. It did not astonish

me in the least, as I have known for near two years that such an event was by no means improbable, and did myself try to contribute to it when I thought it not at all irreconcileable with his former conduct. Nor do I wonder at your announcing in effect the same of yourself. Were I surprised, I should contradict one of my own maxims which I have scarce or never known to fail, and which is, that men are always most angry with those with whom they quarrel last, which produces reconciliations between those whose hatreds agree in *eodem Tertio*. But in truth I concern myself in no man's politics but my own; first because I have no more right to dictate to others, than I allow any body to dictate to me: and secondly because I can see into no heart but my own, nor know its real motives of action. My own point has been to be consistent ever since I first thought on politics, which was five and forty years ago, and I feel a satisfaction in having been so steady, because it seems to me if I do not deceive or flatter myself, that it is a proof that I have acted on principle and not from disappointment, resentment, passion, interest, or fickleness.

It made me smile indeed when I heard that Lord Harcourt on his change had given away his ring of Brutus to Lady Jersey's little boy, because I do not see how any thing that has happened within this twelvemonth has affected the character of Brutus, who died seventeen hundred years before the *coalition was thought on*; I am glad however that if I change, I may keep my Caligula without committing treason.

Your distinction of the *Crown's friends* is I own, too

theologic a refinement for my simple understanding, who never conceived a confusion of two natures in one person, yet still remaining separate; nor in human affairs should I comprehend why a Pope's disgracing himself as a gentleman by the meanest duplicity should make one fall in love with his Tiara. Do you think I should accept it for sound reasoning if you were capable of telling me, that though you vowed in a sermon that you would never be a Bishop, yet your gown being distinct from you, you could see no reason why your gown *ought* not to be turned into lawn sleeves?

What miracles the new set of men that are to arise are to atchieve, I neither know nor care; I shall be out of the question before that blessed milennium arrives, unless they are already come, as perhaps they are, and for that too I cannot have long to care; though I firmly believe that your *new set* will only effect what has often been tried before, and what you say *ought* to be tried *i. e.* to prove themselves the *Crown's friends*, an act of honest loyalty which I dare to say the wearer will be the first to forgive.

You see by my using the same liberality of correspondence I approve of yours. I am above disguising my sentiments, and am too low for any man to disguise his to me. Mine indeed having no variety in them, must be less entertaining, and therefore, unless I take a freak of hobbling to court, you can have no curiosity to hear them, nor should I have mentioned them now, but that I thought it respectful to you, and candid when you communicated your new sentiments to me, to tell you that mine remained unaltered.

I cannot imagine why you think that I shall not like your tragedy; am I apt to dislike your writings? though I am too sincere to flatter you when I think you unequal to yourself, I did reckon that I was one who had taste enough to be sensible to the utmost of the beauties of your capital works. Tragedy is certainly not a walk in which I can believe you will miss your way; you have trodden more difficult paths with the happiest facility. I shall be glad to see your piece when you will indulge me with it. I am

yours ever

H. W.

P. S. Mr. Jerningham has just published a new poem on the doctrines of the Scandinavian Bards. It is far superior to his other works. The versification is good; very many expressions and lines beautiful, and the whole nervous and not like his uniform turtle-ditties. It might have been thrown into a better plan; and it ends rather abruptly and tamely. He seems to have kept the descent of Odin in his eye, though he had not the art of conjuring up the most forceful feelings as Gray has done in a subject in which there is so much of the terrible, though one has scarce any idea of what the whole is about, yet one is enwrapt by it, as one is delighted with the *Flower and Leaf* though a mere description of ladies in white velvet and green satin set with rubies and emeralds, and holding wands of *agnus castus*.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

DEAR SIR, Berkeley Square, March 19, 1796.

I was rejoiced to see your hand again, though I am not yet able to answer it with mine, but I will as soon as I can scrawl out a letter which you will be able to read and which has not been possible for me to do these fifteen weeks: I have had a very bad fit of the gout for fifteen weeks in every limb. I still cannot walk across my room, but held up by two or three servants and have to this moment five or six orifices venting chalk in one finger of my right hand, which is dressed every day by a surgeon; besides all this, I was very near going off towards the beginning of my illness by an inflammation in my bowels.

I am ashamed to trouble you with all this, especially when I was eager to thank you and reply particularly to your letter — that I must contrive to do myself, being happy that your sentiments agree so much with mine on the particular subject of your letter, though some singular circumstances, which I will explain at large, and which are well known to Lord Harcourt and Mr. Frederic Montagu will prevent my going farther than I have already done, though that has not been moderately neither, for I have been full as much offended as you are, and will point out to you more rocks of offence than you yet know, not forgetting the former subject.

This is all I can say till I can explain myself more

at large, which I will do as fast as my weakness and miserable hand will let me. In the mean time I am with great sincerity and cordiality,

dear Sir,

your obedient humble servant,

ORFORD.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

DEAR SIR, Berkeley Square, March 22, 1796.

I could not without using too many words express to you how very much I am offended and disgusted by Mr. Knight's new insolent and self-conceited Poem; considering to what *height* he dares to carry his impious attack, it might be sufficient to lump all the rest of his impertinent sallies in one mass of censure as trifling peccadillos; but as you and I are personally interested to resent the libertys he has taken with our late great and respectable friend, I must if I can get through this letter enter more minutely into some detail.

The vanity of supposing that his authority, the authority of such a trumpery prosaic poetaster as Mr. Knight was sufficient to re-establish the superanuated atheism of Lucretius, by his. His presuming to pronounce him the best of the Roman Poets just as he allots the same rank to Sheridan over Gray and our first Bards was I believe partly intended to establish a precedent for scores of his own wretched lines full of tautology,

void of novelty, and his descriptions spun out to tediousness. In one respect he has executed justice on himself by his audacity in polluting Gray's *Champagne* and Heliconian element with his hog-wash: who that sips the latter after tasting the other can help rinsing his mouth? Nor is this his only violation of our immortal friend's ashes. He tells a silly falsehood of Gray being terrified from writing by Lloyd's and Colman's trash, that was squirted from the kennel against you both, forgetting (though affecting to revere Gray) the excellent letter to you on that occasion, about *Combustling*, derisory enough to have stopped their writing any more, instead of their checking him.

I could make fifty other objections to this pretended and ill warranted dictator for to all taste who Jacobinically would level the purity of gardens would as malignantly as Tom Paine or Priestley guillotine Mr. Brown, and who to give a specimen of his own genius for gardening, the Lord knows how connected! has given in his *Landscape* an ugly clumsy Etruscan brass milkpot as a model of the line of beauty.

Notwithstanding all I have said, I cannot engage in an open war with him and beg not to be named in it. He is a great favourite of a very near relation of mine and intimate friend with whom I have already had a warm altercation, and whom I should mortally disoblige, and through whom I have received several civilities from the person himself. I am besides too frank and open, and too much pleased and honoured by the revival of our correspondence to have any

mean *reserve* with you, and therefore I acknowledge to you that weak and broken as I am and tottering to the grave at some months past seventy-eight, I have not spirits or courage enough to tap a paper-war, and what moderate abilities I may have had are not less decayed than my limbs, and the labour I have forced myself to take to make this second page more legible than the first, which my poor fingers from such long disuse had almost forgotten to do, tells me how very helpless I am and how unfit to engage in a controversy of any kind. In fact repose without pain and a tranquil end is all I dare to wish, though pain I fear I must expect.

You, dear Sir, I would not divert from dethroning this usurper. I did ardently wish you had overturned and expelled out of gardens this new Priapus, who is only fit to be erected in the Palais de l'Egalité. But should you determine on a crusade against such infidels, I should rather wish you to employ your all puissant arms, irony and ridicule. Your sonnet would imply anger and it is below your dignity to be provoked by this knight of the brazen milk-pot, who would be proud of having *you* for a serious antagonist. Indeed I doubt unless you make it ridiculous to read him, whether you may not help it off the bookseller's counter, where I hear it is likely to doze with other literati, till it takes its degrees in the university of waste paper.

Having been for three days carving this letter, which by extreme slowness and care I hope will not give you

much trouble to decypher after the first page, which I scribbled with my ancient precipitation, till I found I could not read it myself. I will attempt no more at present, but to send you a parody on two lines of Mr. Knight which will show you that his poem is seen in its true light by a young man of allowed parts, Mr. Canning, whom I never saw. The originals are the two first lines at the top of page 5:—

> Some fainter irritations seem to feel
> Which o'er its languid fibres gently steal. KNIGHT.
> Cools the crimp'd cod, to pond-perch pangs imparts
> Thrills the shelled shrimps and opens oysters' hearts.
> CANNING.

However, I wish to see much superior wit and far superior and genuine poetry lanced at the head of this marauder, and in any case I flatter myself our correspondence will not close again while there is a finger left of

dear Sir,

Your sincere humble servant,

ORFORD.

TO MR. STONHEWER.

DEAR STONHEWER, Aston, March 10, 1797.

I don't wonder that Lord Orford's death was not known to Mr. Montagu, for strange to say it was not published in the Sun, (a paper he probably takes in) so

that I did not know it till the day before I received yours of the 7th where he was mentioned as the late Lord Orford having left £1000 to the Dutchess of Gloucester; as to his will, it is full as rational a one as any body had reason to expect, and as to the bequest of his papers, the Miss B — s or others are the fittest to have them. I would not demean myself or any of my friends to solicit for my own letters &c., so I let that subject rest.

I have not yet seen Alderson. He came down the evening before the Fast, and I heard preached, but with a very bad cold. He has sent me the common place, [*book*] the Duke of Grafton's present, Mr. Penn's also, and the first part of the Pursuits of Literature, had you expended the balance in your hands, whatever it was, for I know not, in the remaining parts, and sent them you would have done something, for I like the first well enough to wish for the sight of the other. But I own to you I am more than half angry with you at your mercantile exactitude in these trifling money matters, I do not believe that for these twenty years we have either of us been in debt to one another on either side ten pounds, and surely, surely if either of us die first, it cannot be a matter of much difficulty, for our executors on one side or the other to liquidate the debt to the survivor. Why then talk of a debt of long standing which you have now balanced and which appears to be in my favour; but you shall have your way, and I will have mine, I'll get somebody else to execute my commissions that there may never be a debt either of long or short

standing between us. I enclose a letter from Harry Norris to his friend I. Holmes, which I beg Mr. Webb would put in the penny post and charge to my account. It is written partly to convey to him my request that he would transcribe the movement in Pleyl, which the note which Lord Harcourt writ to you seem'd to solicit. Holmes will bring it to you, and when you receive it I desire you will present it with my respects to his Lordship, and add, that if his Lordship wishes that either his musical under-butler or anybody else should be instructed how it is to be sung (as in my little choir) the said Holmes (who sings a good tenor) will readily instruct them.

By all means keep Palgrave as long with you all in in town as possible; I dread his going back to his parsonage. He seems to me to have less self resources than ever, though he passed a week with me better than I had hoped, yet I suspect it was much owing to having his servant sleep in the next room, for from some anecdotes I have learned he dreads being alone, which is a sad symptom; you find I fancy too, that his deafness increases, which to a man whose pleasures depend wholly or so much on conversation, is a dismal misfortune.

I have not heard either from him or Miss F., or Lady Vernon in answer to a letter *tripartite*. I writ to them while they remained at Sudbury.

I had meant this morning to have drove over to Eckington to see Alderson but the cold east wind deterred me, as I am only just recovered from a cold in the head

which almost incapacitated me from preaching my Fast sermon. My not having seen him makes many things here unwrit, which perhaps I should have found occasion to add. Pray tell me whether it be necessary to write a letter in form to his Grace? if it be not, surely you can trick me up a respectful message as well as if it were here written. There is Mr. Penn too; mercy on me! what can I say to him, except I was to congratulate him on the benefit he received from the waters at Spa in 1782, where he says

"Unwonted strength my members own."

Pray read the Dr. this line, for though I dare say he has the book as well as me, it will be a long time before he cuts the leaves and detects this poetical beauty. I hope by this time his gout has left him and that he is convalescent. My kind love to him, and to you too

from yours most truly

W. MASON.

Do I do right in sending this under your neighbour's cover?

EPISTLE

TO

THE HONOURABLE HORACE WALPOLE.

To brand imposture, to detect a Knave,
Who else might slink secure into his grave,
Some years ago, My Walpole! had its merit,
While yet remain'd a gleam of Public-spirit.
When Douglas plucked the mask from Lauder's face,
Douglas was thought to do a deed of grace,
When a like touch of his Ithuriel's spear
Bad Archy Bower in full-blown fraud appear,
And from a martyr, change into a cheat,
Full sure the Doctor did a doughty feat.
Egregious Scot! who hot, in Truth's defence,
Beat up his namesake's Stews for evidence,
And, though each Rogue was of his Mother Nation,
Disdain'd to give their Lyes a Dispensation.
Egregious Scot! if Fame my Verse can give,
Long as that Verse (at least) thy Name shall live.
But Times are chang'd e'en Douglas' self must own,
Since Scottish King-craft reassum'd the throne.
Now Bower and Lauder, were they Both alive,
With Wit would figure, and by Parts would thrive.
Ill fated Pair! whom that blind Midwife Time
Dragged into birth some years before their Prime;

And ruthless Death drove to the realms of night
Some years before our glorious Fifty eight.
Else, worthy Pair! crown'd with a Court's attention,
Macpherson's self had got but half your Pension,
And still inspired by Hunger's urgent call,
Created every month a new Fingal.
Ah burn then, Horace! thy ill-tim'd defence,
Truth, drest in all thy native eloquence,
Will nought avail. Thou stand'st (as I am told)
Indicted for a Crime, full ten years old,
" For that, not having, fore thy eyes the fear,
" Of Grub-street, thy proud heart disdain'd to hear
" A Stranger Boy, who sent thee a rich store
" Of Saxon, Norman, and Heraldic Lore;
" With manie a Rime, coygnd by thilk craftie Skylle,
" As cherisonde * the herte of gode Deane Mylle;
" Nay turn'd him, on this wicked town, to graze,
" Without his Pittance or of Pence or Praise;
" Because (I blush the reason to repeat)
" Only, because you thought the boy a cheat."
I think so still.—This Sir is no denyal;
Tis pleading guilty; it impedes your Trial;
Disown the general Charge, and let us bring
The council of our Sovraign Lord the King,
Even Sawney's self, in his new silken gown
To prove the Fact, as Plaintiffe for the crown.
The attorney General's speech in our next.

" It hurts me (Gentlemen upon the Jury)
It hurts my finer feelings, I assure ye;

* Cherisonde, pleased or comforted. Chatterton made the noun Cherisaunc, and I on equal authority have made the verb.

To try the strength of my forensic arts,
Against a Man of the defendant's parts;
Who, had he lived in the third Richard's reign,
Had been Lord Steward, or Lord Chamberlain.
I say it hurts me much, that such a man
Should draw his line on this contracted plan;
So falsely delicate; so over nice;
To deem poetic forgery a Vice.
To this all Poets plead prescription wholly,
I wont except Old Ossian, or Old Rowley:
Whether they liv'd, is immaterial quite,
A want of Being * bars no claim of right.
Not to discriminate is mighty odd,
Tween Thomas Chatterton and Doctor Dodd.
Pope said tis true, when Pope possest that name,
He † thought a Lye in Verse, and prose the same.
But will his Friend Lord Mansfield find it Law?
In Pope's Reports tis not the single flaw.
There are who do not by his code abide
Which reads, that "Murray ‡ is his Country's Pride."
Lawyers there are, and on that side am I,
Who ground it on his Privilege to Lye,
Yet still demur, whether such power extend,
To vest for Life his Leasings in his Friend.

* The Attorney's assertion seems to militate a little against common sense; it is nevertheless good law. It may be argued "that a man who was never alive, was incapable of committing a forgery," but the question here is not of competency but of right. A married man may be incompetent to beget children, but the right to beget them legally is still in him. The case is exactly parallel, both rights being dormant.

† See Pope's Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, v. 339.

‡ Where Murray long enough his Country's Pride
Shall be no more than Tully or than Hyde.
Pope, Epistle 6, v. 53.

But waving this as one of Pope's old flaws,
I enter on the merits of the cause.
A youth is dead. Felo de se, or not,
By P—, or Poison matters not a jot.
A Youth is dead, who might have been alive,
Had the Defendant found him means to thrive;
Lodg'd him at Strawbery Hill, in decent dress,
And made him the Corrector of his Press.
Why did he not? — His reason I repeat,
Only because he thought the Youth a Cheat.
Ridiculous! — If Pleas so very weak
Be held admissable; Let Campden take
The Steerage of the State; for North and I,
Will yield the office mighty readily.
Who'll fit your fleets to give the French a beating.
If you prohibit them the right of cheating?
Or one sound Loaf for all Coxheath procure?
I'll answer for my Countryman — not Muir.*
Your camps must starve, your Navy be undone —
Expedients fail ye; and Contractors shun.
Where will you find, I pray, so great a Novice,
Will serve without his perquisites of Office?
Who without plate, and ——— pounds a day;
Will beg your Pardon from America?
That Man must be a Bramin, or a Dervis
Who will not sip the sweets of secret Service.
His Grace of Richmond plâgued us all last year
With calculations; making it appear,
In spite of all the trifling sums we granted,
How much our army, and our navy wanted.

* A Man who after gaining 50 per Cent by his contract for Rum, now furnishes all the Camps with bread.

He mist the mark, ev'n grant his reasoning true;
I have a greater want than these in view.
Poor if we be in Land and water fighters,
We're poorer still in Ministerial Writers.
Broad tongued Shebbeare like every other dog
Has had his day.—Johnson is grown a Log.
Home and Macpherson now their weambs* are full
Grow very indolent and very dull.
To own the Truth, we Scots have found a way
To get for all we publish double pay—
And write at once for Cadell, and Sir Gray.
For this sage end, we ne'er condense our Sense,
But spread o'er Quartos our thin Eloquence;
Scorning in Pamphlet channels to confine,
The Torrent of our Energy divine.
While English Readers hate a bulky book,
And leave the Lake, to tipple at the brook.
But he the Youth whose Loss we now deplore;
Which Loss we lye at the defendant's door,
Was Bristow born, yet tis by all agreed
He'd Parts might figure ev'n beyond the Tweed.

To be continued but I know not when, for I am at present much interrupted, and am besides preparing for my journey. If the person who brings this should chance to meet with you at home, he will tell you all I know of myself, and of my motions, nor is he ignorant of the contents for I know he may be trusted. I would not wish you to write here to me again; but in about a fortnight from this time, I hope to be at a Place where I would much rather meet you than your

* A Scottish name for Bellys.

Letter, though I should like to meet both, or your Letter a day before you.

Ye Courtly Heroes who so boldly vote
To cut America's collective throat
And hope to tear her limb from limb asunder
With Johnson's, Eden's and Lord Carlisle's thunder,
Your threats are vain, your very looks are fibs
Cowards! ye quake at crackers and at squibs,
Trembling lest every stone the rabble darts
Should break the casement of your guilty hearts.

I have put your thought into careless verse; if you think it will do, I leave you to do what you please with it, for I have not a moment's time, the care of my poor child Elfrida engrosses all my attention.

ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES.

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PAGE 2.

Madame du Deffand. See 'Walpole's Misc. Correspondence, vol. v. p. 80, and 'Quarterly Review,' May, 1811. Her portrait of the famous wit of the day among us, rapidly struck off at first sight, was not wanting in accuracy: "Ce que vous me dites de M. Selwyn, est parfait; j'y ajoute qu'il n'a que l'esprit de tête, et pas un brin de cœur: vous définiriez bien mieux que moi ce que je veux dire." Walpole had said to her: "Faite en sorte qu'il vous parle en mauvais français. Il fait tant d'efforts pour parler votre langue en vrai académicien, qu'il oublie totalement d'y joindre des idées. C'est un beau vernis pour faire briller des riens."

PAGE 5.

Chatterton. H. Walpole's most complete vindication of himself as regards his treatment of Chatterton, for which he received so much undeserved abuse, may be found in his Works, vol. iv. p. 207, &c.; it was printed at Strawberry Hill in 1779. See also the admirable and elegant defence in the Preface of the Editor, Mr. Berry, vol. i. p. 9.

PAGE 5.

Mr. Tyrwhitt has recanted. "Mr. Tyrwhitt was actually a believer when he first printed on the subject; but seeing good ground for changing his opinion, he *actually cancelled several leaves before his volume was published.*" J. Nicholls. See 'Life of D. Wray,' p. 158.

PAGE 17.

Pope and Lord Mansfield. "Mr. Pope, I know, lamenting the misapplication of talent, enumerates the desertion from Helicon, and tells us

"'How many Martials were in Pulteney lost.'

But this was irony and compliment, and Pope himself would have been sorry that his friend, our great Chief Justice,

"'He with a thousand arts refined,'

should have quitted the bar and been nothing but Poet Laureate." See 'Walpole's Letters,' p. 214.

PAGE 17.

I owed to you and Gray. "I communicated the poems to Mr. Gray and Mason, who at once pronounced them forgeries, and declared there was no symptom in them of their being the production of near so distant an age. The language and metre being totally unlike anything ancient. For though I, in doubt, ascribed them to the time of Richard I., Mr. Gray and Mr. Mason saw nothing in the poems that was not more recent than even the reign of Henry VIII." See Walpole's Letter to the Editor, p. 222.

PAGE 29.

Beddington, the seat of the Carew family, near Carshalton. Much of the house has been altered and re-built, but the fine hall, which is said to have been the model on which Wolsey built that at Hampton Court, still remains. The garden was famed for its fine orange-trees, which grew for near a century in the open ground, protected only in winter, which were at length killed in a severe season. This seat and family were once very celebrated; Pope mentions it in a Letter to Mrs. Blount, Sept. 26, 1723. "I lately saw a sketch this way, on the bower of Beddington.

> "In Tempe's shades the living lyre was strung,
> And the first Pope (immortal Phœbus) sung;
> These happy shades, where equal beauty reigns,
> Bold rising hills, slant vales and far-stretched plains,
> The grateful verdure of the waving woods,
> The soothing music of the falling floods;
> A nobler boast, a higher glory yield,
> Than that which Phœbus stamp'd on Tempe's field;
> All that can charm the eye or please the ear,
> Says—harmony itself inhabits here."

See 'Walpole's Letters to Lady Ossory,' vol. i. p. 353, describing the place.

PAGE 38.

Anti-Sejanus. The Rev. Mr. Scott, a well-known political writer, under the title of Anti-Sejanus, in pamphlets and the 'Public Advertiser.' He wrote in favour of Lord Sandwich, with whom he was connected. See 'Gray and Nicholl's Correspondence,' p. 185. (Ed. Ald.) and Walpole's

'Memoirs of George the Third,' vol. iii. p. 306, and vol. ii. p. 269, where see the Editor's note.

PAGE 43.

Fresnoy's Art of Painting. See Walpole's notice of this translation, in a letter, p. 147. See also Walpole's 'Miscellaneous Correspondence,' vol. vi. p. 136—170. The reader may consult the 'Critical Review,' vol. lv. p. 270. April, 1783.

PAGE 50.

One of His Majesty's Chief Justices. The younger Lord Lyttleton. On the singular circumstances said to have attended his death, see Maurice's 'Memoirs of an Author,' part iii. p. 29. "In a dream, there appeared, standing at the foot of his bed, a beautiful diminutive female figure, with a small bird perched on her finger. The apparition announced to him that the *third* night, precisely at twelve, his death would take place. He was found dead by his valet, with his watch in his hand, and the hand just passed the fatal hour." See also a more particular account of this event in the 'Memoirs of Frederick Reynolds,' vol. ii. pp. 192—196; and Gentleman's Mag., Sept. 1837. There is an account of him by M. Pennington, in the 'Memoirs of Miss Carter,' and in 'Chatham Correspondence,' vol. iv. p. 344. Born, 1744; died, 1779; aged thirty-five. Sir Walter Scott, in his 'Demonology,' says: "Of late it has been said and published, that the unfortunate nobleman had previously determined to take poison, and had it in his own power to ascertain the execution of the prediction.

PAGE 57.

Tickell's Hodge-Podge. Richard Tickell published 'Common-place Arguments against the Administration, with obvious Answers, intended for the opening of the new Parliament,' 1780. See Monthly Review, Nov., 1760, p. 365. Tickell died 1793, at Hampton Court Palace. He also published 'The Project,' a poem, 1778: 'Mask of Fashion;' 'Anticipation,' a political pamphlet, which had great vogue, 1778, and others.

PAGE 63.

Paltry poems. Poems by a young nobleman of distinguished abilities, lately deceased 4to. (*i. e.* Lord Lyttleton.) See account of them in the Critical Review, vol. xlix. p. 123.

PAGE 65.

On Mr. Stanley's death. See Walpole's Letters to Lady Ossory, vol. i. p. 401.

PAGE 65.

Raspe. See p. 174, Rodolph Raspe's 'Critical History of Oil-Painting,' 4to, 1761: to which are added, 'Theophilus de arte Pingendi,' &c.

PAGE 69.

Philodamus. A Tragedy, 1767, 4to. Dedicated to Madam * * *. The Play was given to the public by Mr. Harris, and Henderson acted Philodamus. See 'Cumberland's Memoirs,' vol. i. p. 211—216. 'Life of Gray,' Aldine Edition, vol. i. p. xxx. Note.

PAGE 70.

Lucan. The note that was omitted, was on Line 641, Lib. iv.

"Non expectatis Antæus viribus hostis."

The most important note in this book by Bentley is on Lib. i. v. 231, which contains and explains his famous metrical canon on the pause at the end of the fifth foot of the verse: "In versu heroico raro admodum fit distinctio plenior pausa, vel clausula, in pede quinto," &c., which though generally, is not universally true. It appears, from an advertisement in Jebb's, 'Bibliotheca Literaria,' no. vii. p. 47, Lond. 1724: "That Dr. Bentley has finished his Notes upon Lucan, and that part will be finely printed in a Letter with a preface."

PAGE 71.

Widow of Delphi. Musical comedy, by Richard Cumberland, 1760. The songs only printed. This piece, though great expectations were formed of it, met with but little success. This preface is often censurable on account of some coarse expressions contained in it. See Baker's 'Biog. Drama.'

PAGE 76.

French Fabliaux. Fabliaux ou Contes du XIIe. et du XIIIe. Siècles, avec des notes historiques, etc., par M. Le Grand, 5 vols. 1781, New Edition. Many of these Tales have been translated in the happiest manner, by the late Mr. Lewis Way, 1 vol. 1796. Mr. Rose in his 'Amadis de Gaul,' p. xii. justly says: "Mr. Way's very happy transla-

tion of the Fabliaux." He considers the one (the first of Le Grand's) 'Le Mule sans Frein,' as admirably versified. See Rose's 'Ariosto,' vol. iii. p. 146.

PAGE 76.

Memoirs of Thomas Hollis. It appears that Archdeacon Blackburn was the compiler of these Memoirs, which appeared in 1760. See Symmon's 'Life of Milton,' p. 39. The book is dedicated to Thomas Brand Hollis, of whom a Memoir was privately printed by Dr. Disney, 1808, 4to. "That good, honest, blunder-headed bigot, Thomas Hollis, who could believe anything but what was good of an Archbishop or a King; and forgive anything, even Christianity itself, in a republican or usurper." See 'Quarterly Review,' No. lxxv. p. 224.

PAGE 85.

Life of Garrick. 'Memoirs of the Life of Garrick,' interspersed with characters and anecdotes of his theatrical contemporaries, &c., by Thomas Davies, New Edition, 1808, 2 vols. A work of entertainment and information.

PAGE 94.

Mr. Tyson. The Reverend Mr. Tyson, of Bennet College, Cambridge. For an account of him, See 'Brydges' Restituta,' vol. iv. p. 236—9. Walpole's 'Misc. Correspondence,' vol. v. p. 245. See also 'Life of Gray,' Ed. Aldine, vol. i. p. lxxiii.

PAGE 94.

The Miniature Picture. Comedy by Lady Craven, acted at Drury Lane, 1784. Not printed. First performed at a private theatre at Newberry.

PAGE 117.

Conde di Egremont. See Letters to Countess Ossory, vol. ii. p. 204. George O'Brien Wyndham, Born Dec. 1751 Died 11 Nov., 1837. This Lady, daughter of Lady Waldegrave, married Lord Euston, Nov. 16, 1784.

PAGE 113.

Maupeou. Chancellor of France died. 1792.

PAGE 122.

Mr. Barret's. Lee Priory, near Canterbury: since better known as the residence of Sir Egerton Brydges. The pictures and curiosities have been sold and dispersed. The two fine and valuable miniatures of Henry the Eighth, and Anne of Cleves, by Holbein, in their original setting of an ivory case, passed into the possession of Sir Samuel Meyrick.

PAGE 124.

A pretty little book, which he called an 'Essay on Prints.' 'Essay on Prints, containing Remarks on the Principles of Picturesque Beauty,' &c. 1768. This work was chiefly formed from Mr. Revely's Collection of Prints. Mr. Landseer, on the 'Art of Engraving,' 1807, speaking of this work of Gilpin's says, "The doctrines throughout the Essay

are vague and unsound."—See Walpole's 'Anecdotes of Painting,' edited by Dallaway, vol. v. p. 162. Part of this Essay seems to have been inserted in Richardson's 'Essay on Painting,' 4to. p. 214, ed. 1792.—See p. 126 of this work.

PAGE 147.

Fresnoy. "I have heard no opinions on Fresnoy yet, but favourable ones. I could wish, myself, some few lines in the 'Epistle to Sir Joshua' a little mended. Can't you get rid of that word 'COIN?' "—'MS. Letter of Wm. Whitehead,' 1783.

PAGE 148.

'Critical Review.' This passage occurs in a review of a work called, 'Miscellaneous Observations on some Points of the Controversy between the Materialists and their Opponents,' 8vo. Dec. 1760, p. 457. It is as follows. The observation by the author: "And I here cannot easily suppress a remark or two, suggested by a slight difference between the last edition, and some former ones of Mr. Hume's 'History of Great Britain.' At p. 323 of the eighth volume of this work (ed. 1778, 8vo.), we read as follows: 'Compositions the *most despicable*, both for style and matter, have been extolled, and propagated, and read, as if they had equalled the most celebrated remains of antiquity:' in the last edition but one of Mr. Hume's History, there was subjoined to this passage a note of reference in these words: 'Such as Rapin, Thoyras, &c.'; which, in the above-quoted posthumous collection, with the author's last corrections and improvements, is enlarged into the following short and significant catalogue: 'Such as Rapin, Thoyras, *Locke*,

Sidney, Hoadly, &c.' It is worth observing, that in the foundations laid (for very different purposes indeed) by one of these *most despicable writers,* Mr. Hume thought fit to erect that vast, but feeble engine of scepticism, which it is evident he himself regarded with uncommon complacency, which has for some time been the object of terror to the weak, and of derision to the strong; and which, but for the rock it stood on, must have sunk, 'like the baseless fabric of a vision,' at the resentment of its creator. To whom, to that *most despicable writer,* Mr. Locke, it may be truly said of him, that he was in every sense, and to the best purposes, the friend of virtue, of liberty, and of mankind; and that his works will be admired as long as the treasures of reason, and the true ends of life are valued and well spent. While Mr. Hume—but I restrain myself; nor can I wonder that the writings of Mr. Locke should be so very little acceptable to a writer and philosopher, who finds himself disposed to depreciate the genius of Bacon, and—

> "'What giddy and fantastic dreams abuse
> A Hampden's virtue and a Shakspeare's muse.'"

PAGE 160.

"*Poor* Lyttleton," were the words of offence. These words occur in the 'Life of Lyttleton,' by Johnson. "When they (the 'Dialogues of the Dead') were first published, they were kindly commended by the Critical Reviewers; and *poor Lyttleton,* with humble gratitude, returned, in a note which I have read, acknowledgments which can never be forgotten, since they must be paid either for flattery or for justice."

PAGE 161.

See Walpole's Character of Hurd, in his 'Letters to Lord Hertford,' p. 272; 'Misc. Letters,' vol. iv. p. 29. See also 'Walpoliana,' p. 137: "I look upon Bishop Hurd as one of those superficial authors whose works are wonderfully adapted to the public taste." Of Hurd's various writings which distinguished him in his own day as a man of taste and learning, probably the 'Dialogues' are now the most generally read:—a species of composition very difficult, and at the same time, when *successful*, very pleasing and attractive, from the lively and dramatic character attached to it. Concerning the alterations in the *successive* editions of these 'Dialogues,' see Parr's 'Warburtoniana,' p. 156, and the contradiction of his statements in the 'Diary of a Lover of Literature,' by Mr. Green, p. 7. He says: "The alterations which respect the strictures on Hume's History, are the most material, and the most curious." Hurd was called by Mr. Graves, in his 'Columella,' "The Addison of the present age;" vol. i. p. 47. On the Latinity of Hurd's 'Epitaph on Warburton,' see Dr. Parr's 'Correspondence,' vol. i. p. 622.

PAGE 176.

Butler. See Walpole, p. 195—229. Born, 1717. John Butler was Chaplain to the King, Prebendary of Winchester, Archdeacon of Surrey, elected to Oxford, 1777, translated to Hereford, 1778; a popular preacher. He was not of the University, but had a Lambeth degree. Published:

1. An Answer to the Cocoa-Tree, from a Whig.
2. Serious Considerations on the Measures of Administration.

3 An Account of the Right Hon. Bilson Legge.

4. Sermons and Charges.

The 'Letters of Junius' were attributed to him, among others.

He died, 1802.

PAGE 177.

Starvation Dundas. ' *Starvation* was an epithet applied to Mr. Dundas, the word being, for the first time, introduced into our language by him, in a speech, in 1775, in an American debate, and thenceforward became a nickname; see p. 310: "I shall not wait for the advent of *starvation* from Edinburgh, to settle my judgment."

PAGE 188.

Mr. Beckford. William Beckford, of Somerly, the seat of the Anguishes in Suffolk for several years. He afterwards resided in Jamaica, where he had an estate. When living at Somerly, he published his work on 'Hunting,' and in 1790, a 'Description of Jamaica.' He died in Wimpole Street, Feb. 12, 1729.

PAGE 191.

Hayley's card. A card of invitation to Mr. Gibbon, at Brighthelmstone, 1761. See 'Hayley's Works,' vol. i. p. 189. He also addressed a sonnet to the same, on the publication of his second and third volumes, in the same year, p. 162. But this was not all: on the publication of the three last volumes, May 8, 1768, Hayley gave occasional stanzas, read after their dinner at Mr. Cadell's, of which Gibbon says: "I seemed to blush while they read an

elegant compliment from Mr. Hayley, whose poetical talents had more than once been employed in the praise of his friend. Before Mr. Hayley inscribed with my name his 'Epistles on History,' I was not acquainted with that amiable man and elegant poet." In the summer of 1761, the Roman Eagle (a proud title) accepted the invitation of the English Sparrow, who chirped in the groves at Eartham, near Chichester." See 'Gibbon's Miscellaneous Works,' vol. i. p. 176, 4to.

PAGE 219.

Verses on Nuneham. 'On the late Improvement at Nuneham, the Seat of the Earl of Harcourt.' See 'Whitehead's Poems,' vol. iii. p. 75.

"Dame Nature, the goddess, one very bright day," &c.

There is also by him a pleasing little Poem—'Inscription for a Tree on the Terrace at Nuncham.' Vol. ii. p. 234.

PAGE 237.

Mr. Burgh; answer to Mr. Lindsay, in 1774, was called a Scriptural confutation of the arguments against the One Godhead, &c., of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, produced by the Rev. Mr. Lindsay, in his late Apology. Mr. Lindsay says: "I was much surprised the other day in conversing with Mr. Mason, to find that he had been privy to the publication, had revised some of the proof-sheets, and approved the doctrine in the highest degree; nay, he told me that Dr. Hurd had just told him that the writer expressed his own sentiments on the Trinity," &c. Mr.

Mason added: "The book must make a great noise; which I could easily believe, if they cried it up." See Belsham's 'Life of Lindsay,' p. 95, note.

PAGE 258.

Bentley's play, 'the Wishes.' I possess a MS. letter from Mr. Bentley to Dodsley, on the subject of the play, which is as follows:

"Teddington, May 23, 1762.

"Mr. Dodsley,

"At the time you were disposed to print 'the Wishes,' it was not in my power to let you have it; as Lord Halifax had done me and it the honour to ask for it, to take along with him to Ireland, where it has been acted. At present, I think to give it to the public, not in the state it appeared at Drury Lane, but as *originally written, and recovered from the violent amputations it underwent.* Near a third part of it will be new to the town. If you think it worth a hundred pounds, it is at your service. As I detest bargaining, your 'yes' or 'no' shall determine the matter between us. If you choose to peruse the play in its present condition, I will send it you. I have an Advertisement and a Dedication ready to be prefixed to it.

"I am, Mr. Dodsley,

"Your humble Servant,

"R. BENTLEY."

PAGE 273.

Cumberland's Spanish Painters. Anecdotes of Eminent Painters in Spain, during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,' by Richard Cumberland, 2 vols. 1782, 12mo. See 'Walpole's Letters,' vol. iv. p. 148, 162, for an interesting account of it. Walpole mentions the notes in a letter to Cole; see Miscellaneous Correspondence, vol. vi. p. 174. It was a passage in vol. ii. p. 206, of this book that so much offended Sir Joshua Reynolds. "Azara tells us that he (Mengs) pronounced of the academical lectures of our Reynolds, that they were calculated to mislead young students into error; teaching nothing but those superficial principles which he plainly avows are all that the Author himself knows of the art he professes." See 'Cumberland's Memoirs,' p. 451, where he praises this work of his; but Mr. Sterline, in his excellent work on the same subject, gives a very different account entirely. He says (see Pref. i.): "It is taken almost from 'Palomino;'" and he gives an account of a most ridiculous blunder of Cumberland, in his translation from the Spanish, mistaking a *dressing-gown* for a *rope-ladder*; see Pref. p. vi. and vol. ii. p. 581, note. See on Cumberland's book, the 'Life of Mengs,' vol. i. pp. 59 to 67, prefixed to a translation of his Works.

PAGE 283.

The Dean and the Squire, 1762. The author of the 'Pursuits of Literature,' says: "A friend of mine has assured me that I am wrong in my conjecture in attributing the 'Heroic Epistle' and 'Postscript' to Mason, and I must own that the 'Epistle to Shebbeare,' and the 'Dean and the Squire,' attributed to this same author, has somewhat di-

minished, but not destroyed my confidence in its probability." And then he adds, with a foreknowledge of the truth: "The Papers of the late Lord Orford very probably throw some light on this subject (1798)." See 'First Dialogue,' p. 54. The same writer says: "I am sure Dr. Milles proved a pleasant subject for that *chef-d'œuvre*, the 'Archæological Epistle,' written by Mr. Mason," p. 74. The 'Dean and Squire,' is printed among Mason's Poems in Chalmer's 'British Poets,' vol. xviii. p. 420. It is called a Political Eclogue, with a satirical dedication to one, Jenyns, against whose 'Disquisition on Government and Civil Liberty' it is pointed.

PAGE 285.

The 'Archæological Epistle,' printed 1782, was given generally on its first appearance to John Baynes, Esq., of Gray's Inn. The translations in Ritson's 'Historical Essay on National Songs' were by Baynes, as, for instance, that from the French of Mary Queen of Scots:

"Ah! pleasant land of France, farewell," &c.

and from the Greek:

"Quaff with me the purple wine," &c.

and others. "For which," says Mr. Ritson, "as well as for the other poetical Translations in the Preface, the public is indebted to the late John Baynes, Esq., a gentleman of considerable erudition, uncommon genius and fine taste, who died universally lamented, at the immature age of twenty-seven." See 'Essay on Scottish Song,' vol. i. p. xlvii.

PAGE 296.

Bishop Newton's Life. Some account of the author's life, with anecdotes of several of his friends, written by himself. See 'Works of Thomas Newton, DD.,' vol. i. p. 1-183. The open and artless confessions in this autobiography did not escape the satirist. In this amusing and confidential narrative, may be seen a very favourable character of Bishop Secker, to whom Walpole was uniformly unjust, at p. 117, and of Dean Milles, another victim of his spleen, at p. 175.

"Prudent as Newton in domestic care,
With no Scriblerian scruples for his heir,
He took, not e'en in thought inclined to rove,
A wife for regularity, not love."

In the year 1761 Dr. Newton thought *seriously* of taking a wife *en seconde*. His reasons were as follow, and may be useful to many: "O vecchi ch'avete bisogno di moglie," and so on. 'Schola de Maritate.' "Dr. Newton found that the study of sacred and classic authors ill agreed with accounts of butchers' and bakers' bills, and from daily experience he was convinced that it was not good to live alone without a helpmate for him, *especially when he had some prospect of a bishoprick*. Such difficulties and troubles opened to his view, two horses, a greater number of servants, a better table, and public days; and he plainly foresaw that he must either fall a prey to servants, or look out for some clever, sensible woman to take to wife, who was a prudent manager and economist, and would lay out his things to the best advantage, who had no more taste and love for pleasure than a reasonable woman should have, who would be happier

in staying with her husband at home, than in perpetually gadding abroad; who though she brought no fortune, yet would save one and be a fortune in herself. In short, the Doctor married on the 5th of September, 1761, and on the 18th of the same month he 'kissed his Majesty's hand for a bishoprick. The Doctor was lucky, 'oscula libavit dum talia fatur.'" "The Bishop," adds a lady of quality, a friend of his, "said upon his marriage, *it was the wisest thing he ever did in his life,* and that she was the most proper wife for him in the world. And, indeed, says the Bishop, she more than *answered his warmest wishes.*"—'Bishop Newton's Life,' vol. i. p. 81. Except in two *aculeated* closing words, his Lordship does not take into his account of wedded love, the "golden shafts, the constant lamb, or the purple wings," which Milton celebrates, and husbands feel. *Vide* 'Pursuits of Literature,' p. 334, Edition sixth.

PAGE. 302.

Miss Seward, whom Hayley praises so much. The mutual praises these votaries of the Muses used to bestow on each other, called out the following *jeu-d'esprit* from the pen of the Greek Professor:

MISS SEWARD.

Pride of Sussex, England's glory,
Mr. Hayley, that is you.

MR HAYLEY.

Ma'am, you carry all before you,
Trust me, Litchfield swan, you do

MISS SEWARD.

Ode, dramatic, epic, sonnet,
Mr. Hayley, you're divine.

MR. HAYLEY.

Ma'am, I'll give my word upon it,
You yourself are—all the Nine, &c.

PAGE 819.

A French poem on *jardins*. 'Les Jardins, ou l'Art d'Embellir les Paysages.' Poème par M. l'Abbé de Lisle. Madame de Genlis, in her Memoirs, is very severe on this poem. "The writings," she says, "of this poet, are full of fickle brilliancy, false thoughts, and stage expressions. He had some animation and brilliancy of colouring. He was a fine versifier, and no one knew better than he the mechanics of Alexandrines. His poem 'Les Jardins,' has a radical defect, *arising from his ignorance of the subject*," vol. v. p. 302. The opinion of M. Palissot is not very different, and perhaps gives us the result of the critical opinion of his countrymen: "Le Poème des Jardins contient des détails très brillans, et des vers très bien faits. Mais les objets de luxe y tiennent trop de place, et les beautés de nature trop peu. On s'attendait à une muse champêtre, et non à une muse de ville, chargée d'ornemens, et souvent un peu maniérée; nous croyons que la traduction des Géorgiques, porté au degré de perfection que M. l'Abbé de Lisle était capable d'y donner, eût ajouté plus d'éclat à sa réputation que son poème, ou plutôt *ses beaux vers sur les* jardins." And then he adds: "Nous pensons que cet ouvrage est loin d'avoir gagné en mérite par les nombreuses additions dont l'auteur l'a surchargé en Angleterre." See 'Œuvres de

Palissot,' t. i. p. 241. In the notice of 'Colardeau,' there are also some strictures still more severe on the versification of de Lisle, p. 186.

PAGE 322.

Gilpin's Drawings. Several of Gilpin's Drawings are in the Rectory House at Aston, where he often visited.

PAGE 325.

I cannot think Mrs. Siddons the greatest prodigy. After this account (praise of Mrs. Siddons), you will guess, or rather you will be certain of Mr. Walpole's opinions. He says: "There is nothing new or original in her." Lord Harcourt's judgment of this great actress on her first appearance, in the uncertain dawn of her fame, will not be uninteresting to us who knew her in her long unclouded lustre. "To say that Mrs. Siddons, in one word, is superior to Mrs. Pritchard in Lady Macbeth, would be talking nonsense, because I don't think that it is possible; but on the other hand, I will not say with those *impartial* judges, Mr. Whitehead and Miss Fauquier, that she does not play near as well. But there are others, too, and in the parts for Mrs. Siddons, that are of this opinion; that she has much more expression of countenance, and can assume parts with a spirit cannot be denied, but that she wants the dignity, and above all, the ever unequalled compass and melody of Mrs. Pritchard. I thought her wonderful, and very fine in the rest of that scene. She throws a degree of proud and filial tenderness into this speech: 'Had he not resembled, &c.' which was new, and of great effect. Her 'Are you a man?' in the banquet scene, I thought inferior to Mrs.

Pritchard's, and for the parts spoken at a great distance her voice wanted power. Her countenance, aided by a studious and judicious choice of head-dress, was a true picture of a mind diseased in the sleeping scene, and made one shudder, and the effect as a picture was better in that, than it had ever been with the taper, because it allows of variety in the actress, of washing her hands; but the sigh was not so horrid, nor was the voice so sleepy, nor yet quite so articulate as Mrs. Pritchard's." Here ends the critique (MS. Letter of Lord Harcourt). This is followed in another Letter, by an account of her in the character of Belvedera.

PAGE 326.

Monsieur Girardin. Monsieur Girardin's gardens laid out somewhat in the English fashion, and in later times the retreat and burial place of Rousseau are well known. They have had as guests, both the Grand Condé and Bonaparte. Monsieur G. erected a stone with a dedication to Shenstone, as one of the earliest and most accomplished of London gardeners, with the following inscription:

"This plain stone
To William Shenstone,
Who in his mind possess'd
A genius natural,
Who in his garden dress'd
Artificial greens rural."

Another on the entrance of a grotto ran thus, in allusion to Dido and Æneas:

"Shower makes 'em both get in, under the cliff of grove,
Thunder stay, hear no more, but only the sweet love."

Some letters from Monsieur Girardin to Lord Harcourt on Mason's Poems, are in the Editor's possession; in one of which he speaks "of the lively colour of Mason's *very sensible poetry.*"

PAGE 330.

Wortley. In Warton's edition of Pope, it is printed 'Worsley,' and the note is, "This was Frances Lady Worsley, wife of Sir Robert Worsley, of Appeldurcombe, in the Isle of Wight, mother of Lady Carteret, wife of John de Carteret, afterwards Lord Granville." There is an excellent letter of this lady to Dr. Swift, in his Letters, p. 77. There is no edition of Pope's Works which I possess, in which it is printed 'Wortley.'

PAGE 330.

On the death of Browne. "Poor Brown! I have really been much concerned and hurt at his unexpected death; for, exclusive of the admiration I naturally feel for true genius in every art, I respected that man's private character, and ever found him obliging, good-humoured, and accommodating in the highest degree; while I felt an affection for him, and liked his company, in spite of his *puns.*"—*From Lord Harcourt's Correspondence with Mason, in MS.*

Many stories were in circulation at the time of George the Third's disparagement of his talent, *after Browne's death*, which are alluded to in this and Lord Harcourt's Correspondence. He says in one: "Many reasons could be given why the visit (*of the King and Queen to Nuneham*) passed, without peeping into closets, courtly witticisms,

or expressions of disappointment of the Works of poor Browne."—Lord Harcourt's Correspondence.

In another letter he writes: "The discovery of *Browne's want of taste is not new to me,* though perhaps from motives of prudence, it was not advisable to make a fuller declaration of that opinion till after his death," &c. See p. 344 of this Correspondence.

The Provost of Eton, Dr. Barnard, used to say that Browne told him that he considered the alterations in the gardens at Blenheim, and the water, as the masterp[illegible] his genius. An inscription at Lord Coventry's, at Cro[illegible] in Worcestershire, near the water, whose willing Naiad [illegible] lowed his footsteps down the vale, to his memory, attests a[illegible] once the skill of the artist and the grateful feeling of th[illegible] owner of the place.

PAGE 249.

Criticism on the Elegy. 'A Critici[illegible] the Elegy a Country Church-yard, being a contin[illegible]f Dr. J[illegible] son's criticism on the Poem of Gray.' [illegible]was w[illegible] by Dr. Young, Professor of Greek at G[illegible] In of Dr. Johnson to M. Piozzi, he mentions p. 289: "The wit of the exquisite criticism a Country Church-yard, by Professor Youn[illegible] Letters to his Kinsfolk,' vol. iii. p. 160; bu[illegible] the author of 'Cyril Thornton,' that it is to[illegible] and not very happy." The other tract is 'A [illegible] some Passages in Dr. Johnson's Lives of the [illegible] larly his Observations on Lyric Poetry and th[illegible] by R. Potter,' 4to. 1783. The severe and e[illegible] ticism of Dr. Johnson has induced the au[illegible]

'Inquiry' to take the opposite side in his defence in this Eulogyis too general and indiscriminate; and though Gray might be successfully defended against many of the attacks of Johnson; yet it did not follow that his poetry was free from some blemishes both in thought and language.

PAGE 350.

Beattie's new volume. 'Dissertations, Moral and Critical, ... James Beattie, LL.D.' 1783, 4to. The defect of this ... is perhaps to be found in its want of originality in the ...ections and reasonings. The reader seems to recollect, ... other and earlier writers, many of the trains of thought, ...d even the substance of the arguments. In the earlier ...ssays, the author seems under obligations to Hartley and ...e; and in th... latter, to Warton, and perhaps to Burke; ...d the literatu... in it, is not out of the ordinary line of ...ding.

PAGE 369.

...r. Kn... his "new, insolent, and self-conceited ... is ...Landscape,' a Didactic Poem, in three ... to Uvedale Price, Esq., by R. P. Knight, ... anger was excited by the disparagement ...w School of Landscape Gardening, advocated ...ht and Mr. Price, of his friend, Mr. Brown, ... ities he thought, and justly, very highly. ...ay be referred to the very elegant and interest- ...s of Mr. Price on the Picturesque, or for a ... of the views of himself and Mr. Knight, and ... criticisms on Mr. Brown's designs in various ...h were less favoured by nature than their own

beautiful seats of Downton and Foxley, to both of which the descriptions of the poet, probably without incorrectness, might be applied,

"Curvata tumore
Parva planities, et mollibus edita clivis,
Creverat in collem, vivo de pumice fontes
Roscida mobilibus lambebant gramina rivis,
Silvaque torrentes ramorum frigore soles
Temperat, et medio brumam sibi vindicat æstu

Lord Harcourt wrote from Nuneham to Mason: "Of course he (Lord Orford) talked to me of Mr. Knight's Poem, which is indeed a pompous nothing; and I am quite sure, that without ever having seen him, or heard what he had said about it, I should have stumbled upon the very same expressions when I returned it to the person who lent it to me, namely: 'That it was a didactic poem without poetry, and which taught nothing.' There is but a small part of this unpoetical poem which treats of the subject you expect from its title, and that little is sufficient to show that he does not understand it. The abuse of Brown is as coarse and illiberal, as it is cruel and unjust."—MS. Letter of Lord Harcourt.

PAGE 380.

To be continued. Mason wrote about twenty lines more, of which the following forms the part immediately succeeding the last printed couplet.

"Who thence translated by the royal nod,
Might change in Pharoah's Court like Aaron's rod,
Curl round the closet, lift its ruby crest,
A sly, sleek serpent, swallowing all the rest.
Oh! let me, ravish'd with a thought so new,
Give better fancy a prophetic view,

A glimpse of what the stripling might have been,
If not frost-nipt by the defendant's spleen.
Yes, let me place in full meridian light,
Visions that burst upon my second sight,
That second sight which many a Scot possesses,
Heaven's gift—as rambling Johnson half confesses," &c.

Mason adds at the end of the verses in MS.: "The reader ought to be informed that on a later publication of the works of Thomas Chatterton, an anonymous person charged Mr. Walpole with treating that author contemptuously, and invited the world to feel indignation at a person who could refuse his patronage to a poor youth of such uncommon abilities. This undeserved accusation led Mr. Walpole to draw up a short narrative of his own behaviour on that occasion, which he intended to publish. This gave rise to the present epistle."

DATES OF THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS RELATIVE TO MYSELF FROM MASON'S MS.

1. Born Feb. 12, old style, 1724.

2. My mother died in childbed, the Christmas following.

3. Admitted pensioner at St. John's College, Cambridge, under Mr. Migley, June 30, 1743; elected scholar of that College the October following.

4. Nominated by the Fellows of Pembroke to a Fellowship in that society (a dispute having occurred between them and the Master concerning the right of election), when Middle Bachelor, 1747.

5. This dispute being compromised, was admitted a Fellow by the Master, in Feb., 1749.

6. Admitted to the degree of Master of Arts, July, 1749. Went into orders. Was instituted to the living of Aston, and appointed Chaplain to the Earl of Holdernesse, Nov., 1754.

7. My father died, Aug. 26, 1753.

8. Archbishop Hutton gave me the Prebend of Holme, in the Cathedral of York, Dec., 1756.

9. Appointed by the Duke of Devonshire Chaplain in ordinary to the King, July 2, 1757.

10. Resigned a bye Fellowship of Pembroke (which was given me by that society, after the foundation Fellowship became vacant), on institution to Aston, 1759.

11. Appointed Chaplain to his present Majesty, Sept. 19, 1761.

12. Dr. Fountayne, Dean of York, made me Canon Residentiary of that Cathedral, Jan. 7, 1762.

13. Installed Precentor of the same church, on the resignation of Dr. Newton, Bishop of Bristol, and on that account, in His Majesty's gift, Feb. 22, 1763.

14. Resigned the same day, to Archbishop Drummond, the Prebend of Holme, on having the Prebend of Driffield annexed to the Primateship.

15. Married the daughter of Wm. Sherman, Esq., of Hull, Sept. 25, 1765.

16. She died in a consumption at Bristol, March 27, 1767. "Ah! amantissima, optima fœmina, vale!"*

17. John Hutton, Esq., Marshe, near Richmond, Yorkshire, died June 12, 1768, by which death an estate in the East Riding came to me in reversion.

18. Mr. Gray died July 30, 1771, and left me his Executor jointly, with Dr. Brown, Master of Pembroke Hall.

19. Resigned the Chaplaincy to the King, Aug. 1773.

N.B.—It appears from this, a MS. at Aston, that Mr. W. Gifford was applied to to write Mason's life, but excused himself as being too much occupied.

* In a MS. book of Mason's he has inserted: "Epitaph on m dearest wife, written at Bristol Hot Wells." It is not generall known that the three last lines of this epitaph are the composition of Gray.—See Correspondence of Gray and Nicholls (ed. Ald.)

It will be observed that the orthography of proper names in the Correspondence of both writers is unusually inaccurate and uncertain, as in the example of Mrs. Barbut for Barbauld; and it also extended, especially in the case of Mason, to the common words of language; and seems, indeed, to have been a point that scarcely occupied his attention.

THE END.

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